

# **WISDOM OF THE DAOIST MASTERS**

THE WORKS OF

**LAO ZI (LAO TZU)**

**LIE ZI (LIEH TZU)**

**ZHUANG ZI (CHUANG TZU)**

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH BY DEREK BRYCE  
FROM THE FRENCH OF LÉON WIEGER'S

***LES PÈRES DU SYSTÈME TAOISTE***

(CATHASIA, LES BELLES LETTRES, PARIS)

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## PREFACE.

This volume contains what has come down to us from three Chinese Sages, Lao Zi, Lie Zi, and Zhuang Zi, who lived between the sixth and fourth centuries before the Christian era.

Lao Zi, the Old Master, was a contemporary of Confucius. He probably lived between the dates 570 - 490 B.C. (the dates of Confucius being 552 - 479 B.C.). Nothing is historically certain about this man. The Daoist tradition says that he was the Zhou Court Librarian, and that he saw Confucius once, about 501 B.C. Weary of the lawlessness of the empire, he left it, and never came back. At the time of his crossing the Western Pass, he composed the celebrated work translated in this volume, for his friend Yin Xi, the Guardian of the Pass. The historian Sima Qian dedicated a short work to him around 100 B.C., saying that, according to some, the family name of the Old Master was Li, his ordinary first name Er, his noble first name Baiyang, and his posthumous name Dan (whence comes the posthumous name Lao Dan). But, adds the famous historian, who was, like his father, more than half Daoist, 'some say otherwise, and, of the Old Master, we can only be sure that, having loved obscurity above all, he deliberately covered up the traces of his life' (Shi Ji, chapter 63). - I do not expound the legend of Lao Zi here, this volume being historical.

Lie Zi, Master Lie, from the name Lie Yukou, lived some forty years in obscurity and poverty in the Principality of Zheng. He was driven away by famine in 398 B.C. At that time his disciples could have written down the substance of his teaching. This is according to the Daoist tradition. It has often been strongly attacked, but the critics of the bibliographic index, Sikucuan Shu, judged that the writing should be upheld.

Zhuang Zi, Master Zhuang, from his name Zhuang Zhou, is scarcely better known to us. He must have been in the decline of his life towards 330 B.C. Sima Qian describes him as 'very learned' (Shi Ji, appendix). He voluntarily spent his life in obscurity and poverty, fighting with verve against the theories and abuses of his times.

It is therefore between the dates 500 and 330 B.C. that the formation of the ideas contained in this volume should be placed. I say the ideas, not the writings; and this is why: The tradition affirms formally that Lao Zi wrote. A careful examination of his work seems to confirm the tradition. It is clearly a tirade, all in one breath, the author returning to the beginning when he wanders; a series of points and maxims, rather than a coherent edition; a statement by a man who is precise, clear, and profound; who takes up points again, and retouches them with insistence. Originally the work was divided neither into books nor chapters. The division

## Preface.

was made later, and fairly clumsily. - An examination of the two treatises bearing the names of Lie Zi and Zhuang Zi gives evidence that these men did not write. They are made up of a collection of notes brought together by listeners, often with variance and errors, then collated, jumbled and reclassified by copyists, and interpolated by non-Daoist hands so well that, in the present text, there are some pieces diametrically opposed to the certain doctrine of the authors. The chapters are the work of later collators who brought together parts which were more or less similar. Several were put in complete disorder by the accident which muddled so many old Chinese writings, the breaking of the tie of a bundle of laths, and the mixing up of the latter. - Note that these treatises were not included in the destruction of books in 213 B.C.

The doctrine of these three authors is one. Lie Zi and Zhuang Zi develop Lao Zi and claim to take his ideas back to Huang Di (the Yellow Emperor), the founder of the Chinese Empire. These ideas are quite close to those of India of the contemporary period, the age of the Upanishads; a realist, non-idealist pantheism. In the beginning was Dao, the Principle, described as imperceptible like tenuous matter, motionless at first. One day this Principle produced De, its Virtue, which acted in two alternative modes, yin and yang, producing, as if by condensation, heaven and earth and the air between them, unconscious agents of the production of all sentient beings. These sentient beings come an go along the thread of a circular evolution, birth, growth, decline, death, rebirth, and so on. Although the Sovereign Above of the Annals and the Odes is not expressly denied, He is by-passed and ignored in a way which is tantamount to a denial. Man has no other origin than the multitude of beings. He is more successful than the others, that is all. And he is man for this time only. After his death, he re-enters into some new existence, not necessarily human, even not necessarily animal or plant. This is transformism in the widest sense of the word. - The Sage makes his life last, through temperance, mental peace, abstention from all that causes fatigue or wear. That is why he keeps himself in obscurity and retreat. If he is drawn from it by force of circumstances, he governs and administers after the same principles, without tiring or wearing himself out, doing the least possible; preferably nothing at all, in order not to hinder the rotation of the cosmic wheel, universal evolution. The Sage lives in apathy through abstraction, looking at everything from so high, so far, that all appears fused into one, so there are no longer any details, individuals, and in consequence there is neither interest nor passion. Above all the Sage has no system, rule, art, morality. There is neither good nor evil, nor sanctions. The Sage follows his natural instincts, lets the world go day by day, and evolves with the great whole.

## Preface.

*The following points remain to be noted, for a just understanding of the contents of this volume.*

Many of the characters used by the ancient Daoists should be taken in their original etymological meaning which has since fallen into disuse or become rare. Thus Dao De Jing does not mean 'Treatise on the Way and Virtue' (meanings derived from modern usage of Dao and De), but 'Treatise on the Principle and its Action' (from the ancient meanings).

None of the facts alleged by Lie Zi and above all by Zhuang Zi are of historical value. The men they name are no more real than the personified abstractions they put on stage. They are oratory procedures, and nothing more. Above all one should guard oneself from taking the assertions of Confucius, which have been invented at will, as real. Some badly informed authors have already fallen into this error, and in good faith imputed to the Sage what his critic Zhuang Zi lent him in order to ridicule him.

Confucius, the butt of Zhuang Zi, is shown in three postures. - First, as the author of conventionalism and destroyer of naturalism; and in consequence the sworn opponent of Daoism. This is the true note. These texts are all authentic. - Second, as converted and preaching more or less pure Daoism to his own disciples. This is fiction, ingeniously constructed to make even the discourses of the Master himself show the insufficiency of Confucianism and the advantages of Daoism. These are authentic texts, but one should guard oneself from imputing them to Confucius. - Third, a few purely Confucian texts are interpolations. I note them all.

Likewise the paragons of the Confucian system, the Yellow Emperor, Yao, Shun, the Great Yu, and others, are shown in three postures. - First, abhorred as authors or falsifiers of artificial civilization. This is the true note; these are authentic texts. - Second, praised for a particular point, common to Confucians and Daoists. These texts also are authentic. - Third, praised in general, without restriction. These are Confucian interpolations. They are not numerous, and I point them out. - I think further that, where the text gives the impression of more than one Yao, or Shun, these are errors made by copyists who have written down one character for another.

It is not known at what date the work of Lao Zi was named Dao De Jing. This name already figured in Huai Nan Zi, in the second century B.C. - In 742 A.D. Emperor Huan Zhong, of the Tang dynasty, gave the treatise of Li Zi the title of Chong Hu Chen Jing, 'Treatise of the Transcendent Master of the Void;' and

## Preface.

the treatise of Zhuang Zi the title Nan Hua Chen Jing, 'Treatise of the Transcendent Master from Nan Hua' (named after the place where Zhuang Zi could have lived), the two authors having received the title of Zhen Ren, transcendent men. The Dao De Jing is often also entitled Dao De Zhen Jing since that time.

There are notes clarifying difficult passages, either in the text, or as footnotes. For personal names look in the index of names\* at the end of the volume. - The letters TH refer to my 'Textes Historiques.'

I have tried to make my translation as easy to read as possible, without harming the fidelity of interpretation. For my aim is to put these old thoughts, which have so many times been thought again by others, and taken by them as new, within the reach of all thinkers.

Xian Xian (He Jian Fu) 2nd. April 1913.

Dr. Léon Wieger S.J.

\*This index gives Pinyin, Wade-Giles, and Wieger's EFEO names. Only the more important names are included. In most cases transcription of Wieger's names and their Wade-Giles equivalent gives an identical result in Pinyin. However there are occasional differences, due either to a difference of opinion on the pronunciation of Chinese names, or the use of alternative names. Where such variations occur, the Pinyin spelling has generally, but not always, been derived from the Wade-Giles alternative. For example Mo Zi has been used throughout, derived from the Wade-Giles Mo-tzu, instead of Wieger's Mei-ti. Likewise, rather than transcribe Wieger's Hoang-ti into Pinyin, we have used the name 'Yellow Emperor' which is already familiar to readers of Wade-Giles texts. Readers should note that the title of emperor is used loosely to include rulers from before the time of the Chinese Empire.

Although Dr. Wieger's other published works (Textes Historiques, etc.) are no longer easily available, his footnotes referring to them have been retained for the sake of completeness.

## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION.

Léon Wieger spent a major part of his adult life in China. His classic translations of the Daoist writings are amongst the most understandable that have ever been produced. The quality of his work gives evidence of his exceptional penetration of the Chinese way of thought. The clarity and precision of his work must also be attributed to his careful study of the traditional Chinese commentaries, his recognition that key words such as Dao (the Principle) should be translated according to their ancient meanings, and his choice of unambiguous descriptive terms such as the Sage, transcendent man, etc. Dr Wieger's explanatory additions to the work include footnotes, separate commentary summaries, and additions to the text which are clearly demarcated in parentheses or in italics.

The French Publishers have reprinted the first edition of Dr. Wieger's book several times without making any corrections or modifications to his conclusions, 'out of respect for his thought.' The present English Language translation is of the complete first edition, unmodified, except that Chinese names have been put in the modern Pinyin spelling. However, as it is now a long time since the first edition was published, a few comments are offered in this introduction.

When Daoism and Confucianism are considered separately, they give the impression of being clearly opposed. This is the point of view taken by Dr. Wieger, especially in his comments concerning the apparent Daoist negation of the Sovereign On High of the Annals and the Odes. His footnote to this effect (Zhuang Zi, chapter 2B) is certainly correct, but the negation is of the concept of the Sovereign as a distinct material being. When Daoism and Confucianism are look on as having existed side by side during more than two thousand years of Chinese history, they are seen as complementary, forming the esoterism and exoterism of the Chinese Tradition. From this point of view it is more correct to see the Daoists as by-passing, rather than denying, the concept of the Sovereign. In Western terms, Dao, the Principle, equates with the metaphysical concept of the absolute, beyond being, or the monotheistic concept of the Most High (as in the Old Testament's 'Melchisedec...priest of the Most High God,' and the 'Most High' of the Koran). The Sovereign equates with the metaphysical concept of 'being', (in monotheistic terms, God).

In his preface Dr. Wieger points out that words and actions which are attributed to people from Chinese history should not be given a historical value. These writers used history as Shakespeare used it, to provide basic characters and events which could be used for purposes of literary illustration. Likewise references

## Translator's introduction.

to geographical locations, and the human body, sometimes relate to the corporeal state, and sometimes to the psychical state. It is probably in the latter sense that the heart 'X-ray' (Lie Zi, chapter 4 H) and the reference to True Men breathing down to their toes (Zhuang Zi, chapter 6 B) should be taken.

Since the time when Dr Wieger wrote his preface, experts are of the opinion that of the book of Zhuang Zi, the first seven chapters (known as the inner chapters) are the most authentic. Chapters 8 to 22 are known as the outer chapters, and the first three of these are regarded by some as including the work of an inferior (and volatile) author. These three chapters should not be taken out of the general context of the book as a whole, in which the Sage 'never acts unless constrained to do so,' and 'seeks obscurity and refrains from action' ... 'when times are politically bad.' Chapters 23 to 33 are known as the miscellaneous chapters. Interpolations apart, the writings in the outer and miscellaneous chapters are no doubt largely the work of members of Zhuang Zi's school, many possibly going back to the Master himself.

Readers should note that the word 'being', when it refers to Dao, the Principle, considered in itself and outside manifestation, is in a sense inappropriate, since the absolute is beyond being. However, as Lao Zi says, 'words cannot describe it,' and recourse is therefore necessary to inappropriate terms leaving the reader to make the necessary mental transposition. - The word 'psychical' has been used instead of psychic, the dictionary definition of the former making it the more appropriate choice for this work. - The word 'evolution' is used in two senses. Firstly, and generally, to describe the unfolding of events in time and space, in this world (or universe). Secondly, but less frequently, it has been used to describe the progress of the being across successive lives or incarnations. - The word 'unnamable' has been used in its older sense, to describe that which is too superior to be given a name, although modern usage of this term is frequently derogatory. - To avoid confusion, the plural of genie has been written as genies, as the correct plural form, genii, is also one of the plural forms of genius.

This is a book to read, and read again, not necessarily all at once, from cover to cover. There is something to be said for beginning with Lie Zi or Zhuang Zi, and ending with Lao Zi, since the condensed nature of the latter makes it the most difficult to understand.

Derek Bryce  
September 1984



LAO ZI

DAO DE JING

OR

A TREATISE ON THE PRINCIPLE AND ITS ACTION

Book 1.

Chapter 1. Text.

A. The principle that can be enunciated is not the one that always was. The being that can be named is not the one that was at all times. Before time, there was an ineffable, unnamable being.

B. When it was still unnamable, it conceived heaven and earth. When it had thus become namable, it gave birth to the multitude of beings.

C. These two acts are but one, under two different denominations. The unique act of generation; that is the mystery of the beginning; the mystery of mysteries; the door through which have issued, on to the scene of the universe, all the marvels which it contains.

D. The knowledge that man has of the universal principle depends on his state of mind. The mind habitually free from passion knows its mysterious essence. The habitually passioned mind knows only its effects.

Summary of commentaries.

*Before time, and throughout time, there has been a self-existing being, eternal, infinite, complete, omnipresent. This being cannot be named or spoken about, because human terms only apply to perceptible beings. Now the primordial being was primitively, and is still essentially, non-sentient, non-perceptible. Outside this being, before the beginning, there was nothing. It is referred to as 'wu,' without form, 'huan,' mystery, or 'Dao,' the Principle. The period when there was not as yet any sentient being, when the essence alone of the Principle existed, is called 'xian tian,' before heaven. This essence possessed two immanent properties, the 'yin,' concentration, and the 'yang,' expansion, which were exteriorized one day under the perceptible forms of heaven (yang) and earth (yin). That day marked the beginning of time. From that day the Principle can be named by the double term of heaven and earth. The heaven-earth binomial emits all existent sentient beings. The heaven-earth binomial is called 'you,' sentient being, which through 'de,' the virtue of the Principle, generates all of its products that fill up the world. The period since heaven and earth were exteriorized is called 'hou tian,' after heaven. The state yin of concentration and rest, of imperceptibility,*

which was that of the Principle before time, is its inherent state. The state yang of expansion and action, of manifestation in sentient beings, is its state in time, in some ways inappropriate. To these two states of the Principle there corresponds, in the faculty of human awareness, rest and activity, or, put another way, empty and full. When the human mind produces ideas, is full of images, is moved by passion, then it is only able to know the effects of the Principle, distinct perceptible beings. When the human mind, absolutely arrested, is completely empty and calm, it is a pure and clear mirror, capable of reflecting the ineffable and unnamable essence of the Principle itself. - Compare with chapter 32.

## Chapter 2. Text.

**A.** Everyone has the idea of beauty, and from that (by opposition) that of not beautiful (ugly). All men have the idea of good, and from that (by contrast) that of not good (bad). Thus, being and nothingness, difficult and easy, long and short, high and low, sound and tone, before and after, are correlative ideas, one of which, in being known, reveals the other.

**B.** That being so, the Sage serves without acting and teaches without speaking.

**C.** He lets all beings become, without thwarting them, he lets them live, without monopolizing them, and lets them act, without exploiting them.

**D.** He does not attribute to himself the effects produced, and in consequence these effects last.

## Summary of commentaries.

Correlatives, opposites, contraries, such as yes and no, have all entered into this world through the common door and they have all come out of the one Principle (chapter 1 C). They are not subjective illusions of the human mind, but objective states, corresponding with the two alternative states of the Principle, yin and yang, concentration and expansion. The profound reality, the Principle, remains always the same, essentially; but the alternation of its rest and movement creates the play of causes and effects, an incessant coming and going. The Sage lets this play have its free course. He keeps himself from interfering either by physical action or moral pressure. He guards himself from poking his finger into the meshwork of causes, into the perpetual movement of natural evolution, out of fear of upsetting this complicated and delicate mechanism. All that he does, when he does something, is to let his example be seen. He leaves to each a place in the sun, freedom, and personal accomplishments.

*He does not attribute to himself the general effect produced (of good government) which belongs to the ensemble of causes. In consequence this effect (of good order), not having been made a target for the jealousy or ambition of others, has a chance of lasting.*

### **Chapter 3. Text.**

**A.** Not making any special case of cleverness, of ability, will have the result that people will no longer push themselves. Not to prize rare objects will have the result that no one will continue to steal. To show nothing as alluring will have the effect of putting people's hearts at rest.

**B.** Therefore the politics of Sages consists in emptying the minds of men and filling their stomachs, in weakening their initiative and strengthening their bones. Their constant care is to hold the people in ignorance and apathy.

**C.** They make things such that clever people dare not act, for there is nothing that cannot be sorted out through the practice of non-action.

### **Summary of commentaries.**

*All emotion, every trouble, each perversion of the mind, comes from its being put in communication by the senses with attractive, alluring exterior objects. The sight of the ostentation of the newly rich creates ambition. The sight of hoards of precious objects creates thieves. Suppress all objects capable of tempting, or at least the knowledge of them, and the world will enjoy perfect peace. Make men into docile and productive work horses; watch that when well-rested they do not think; hinder any initiative, suppress any enterprise. Knowing nothing, men will not be envious, will not need surveillance, and they will benefit the state.*

### **Chapter 4. Text.**

**A.** The Principle produces in abundance, but without filling itself up.

**B.** Empty abyss, it seems to be (is) the ancestor (origin) of all beings.

**C.** It is peaceful, simple, modest, amiable.

**D.** Spilling itself out in waves, it seems to remain (it remains) always the same.

**E.** I do not know of whom it is the son (where it comes from). It seems to have been (it was) before the Sovereign.

## Summary of commentaries.

*This important chapter is devoted to the description of the Principle. Because of the abstraction of the subject, and perhaps also through prudence, his conclusions shocking the ancient Chinese traditions, the author uses three times the verb 'to seem' instead of the categoric verb 'to be'. - He does not declare himself on the question of the origin of the Principle, but places it before that of the Sovereign of the Annals and the Odes. This Sovereign could not therefore be, for Lao Zi, a God creator, or governor, of the universe. The Sovereign is therefore, practically, negated (or bypassed - see translator's introduction). - The Principle, in itself, is like an immense abyss, like an infinite spring. All sentient beings are produced by its exteriorization, through its virtue operating in the heaven-earth binomial. But sentient beings, terminations of the Principle, do not add to the principle, do not make it greater, do not fill it up, as is said in the text. Since they do not go outside it, they do not diminish it, nor empty it, and the Principle remains always the same. - Four qualities are attributed to it, which later on will often be put forward for imitation by the Sage (for example, chapter 56). These qualities are inadequately defined by the positive terms peaceful, simple, modest, amiable. The terms of the Chinese text are in fact more complex: 'Being soft, without sharp corners or cutting edges; not being embroiled or complicated; not dazzling, but shining with a tempered, somewhat dull, light; willingly sharing the dust, the humbleness, of the common people.'*

## Chapter 5. Text.

- A.** Heaven and earth are not good to the beings that they produce, but treat them like straw dogs.
- B.** Like heaven and earth, the Sage is not good for the people he governs, but treats them like straw dogs.
- C.** The betwixt of heaven and earth, seat of the Principle, the place from where its virtue acts, is like a bellows, like the bag of a bellows of which heaven and earth would be the two boards, which empties itself without exhausting itself, which moves itself externally without cease.
- D.** This is all that we can understand of the Principle and of its action as producer. To seek to detail it further using words and numbers would be a waste of time. Let us hold ourselves to this grand idea.

## Summary of commentaries.

*There are two kinds of goodness: First there is goodness of a superior order, which loves the whole, and only loves the integral*

parts of this whole as integral parts, and not for themselves, nor for their own good. Second there is goodness of an inferior order, which loves individuals, in themselves, and for their own good. Heaven and earth, which produce all beings through the virtue of the Principle, produce them unconsciously and are not good to them, says the text. They are good to them from a superior goodness, not an inferior goodness, say the commentators. This comes back to saying that they treat them with a cold opportunism, envisaging only the universal good, not their particular good; making them prosper if they are useful, suppressing them when they are useless. This cold opportunism is expressed by the term 'straw dog.' In antiquity, at the head of funeral processions they carried figures of straw dogs designed to take up all the unpleasant influences on the journey. Before the funeral they were prepared with care and looked after because they would soon become useful. After the funeral they were destroyed because they had become unpleasant, stuffed as they were with captive noxious influences, as Zhuang Zi tells us in chapter 14D. - In government the Sage should act like heaven and earth. He should love the state and not its individuals. He should favour useful subjects, and suppress useless, hindering, or harmful subjects, opportunely, without any other consideration. The history of China is full of applications of this principle. Such a minister, cherished for a long time, was suddenly executed because, the political orientation having changed, he would from then on have been in the way. Whatever had been his earlier merits, his time had come in the universal revolution. He was suppressed like a straw dog. It is useless to show that these ideas are diametrically opposed to the Christian ideas of Providence, of the love of God for each of his creatures, of grace, benediction, etc. That is goodness of an inferior order, say the Daoist Sages with a disdainful smile. - There follows the famous comparison of the universal bellows, to which the Daoist authors often return. It will be developed further in the next chapter. - The conclusion is that all that one knows of the Principle and its action, is that it produces the universe made up of beings; but the universe alone matters to it, not any particular being. This last point can only be made with the reservation that it depends on whether one can employ the verb 'to matter' with reference to a producer that breathes out its work without knowing it. Brahma of the Hindus has at least some kindness in the soap-bubbles he blows; the Principle of the Daoists has none.

## Chapter 6. Text.

A. The expansive transcendent power which resides in the median space, the virtue of the Principle, does not die. It is always

- the same, and acts the same, without diminution or cessation.  
B. This virtue is the mysterious mother of all beings.  
C. The doorway of this mysterious mother is the root of heaven and earth, the Principle.  
D. Sprouting forth, she does not expend herself; acting, she does not tire herself.

### Summary of commentaries.

*It must not be forgotten that the work of Lao Zi was not originally divided into chapters, and that the divisions made later have often been arbitrary, sometimes clumsy. This chapter continues and completes paragraphs C and D of chapter 5. It deals with the genesis of beings, through the virtue of the Principle, which resides in the median space, in the bag of the universal bellows, whence everything comes. Paragraphs A and B refer to the virtue of the Principle; paragraphs C and D to the Principle itself. The term 'doorway', with the impression of two swinging doors, signifies the alternate movement, the play of the yin and the yang, first modification of the Principle. This play was the 'root', that is to say it produced heaven and earth... In other words, it was through the Principle that heaven and earth were exteriorized, the two boards of the bellows. 'De', the universal productive virtue, emanates from the Principle. It operates through, and between, heaven and earth, in the median space, producing all sentient beings without exhaustion and without fatigue.*

### Chapter 7. Text.

- A. If heaven and earth last forever, it is because they do not live for themselves.  
B. Following this example, the Sage, in withdrawing, advances; in neglecting himself, he conserves himself. As he does not seek his own advantage, everything turns to his advantage.

### Summary of commentaries.

*If heaven and earth last forever, are not destroyed by the jealous, the envious, or by enemies, it is because they live for all beings, doing good to all. If they were to seek their own interest, says Wang Bi, they would be in conflict with all beings, a particular interest being always the enemy of the general interest. But as they are perfectly disinterested, all beings flock towards them. - Likewise, if the Sage were to seek his own interest, he would only have troubles, and would succeed in nothing. If he were disinterested like heaven and earth, he would only have friends, and would succeed in everything. - In order to come to last,*

it is necessary to forget oneself, says Zhang Hongyang. Heaven and earth do not think of themselves, and they are also the most durable. If the Sage is without self-love, his body will last and his enterprises succeed. If not, it will be quite otherwise. - Wu Deng recalls quite rightly, that by heaven and earth it is necessary to understand the Principle, acting through heaven and earth. In this chapter, therefore, the disinterestedness of the Principle is proposed as an example to the Sage.

### Chapter 8. Text.

A. Transcendent goodness is like water.

B. Water likes to do good to all beings; it does not struggle for any definite form or position, but puts itself in the lowest places that no one wants. By this, it is the reflection of the Principle.

C. From its example, those who imitate the Principle, lower themselves, sink themselves. They are benevolent, sincere, regulated, efficacious, and they conform themselves to the times. They do not struggle for their own interest, but yield. Therefore they do not suffer any contradiction.

### Summary of commentaries.

*This chapter continues the preceding one. After the altruism of heaven and earth, the altruism of water is proposed by way of example. Ge Zhanggeng summarizes as follows: 'Fleeing from the heights, water seeks the depths. It is not idle by day or by night. Above, it forms the rain and the dew, below, the streams and rivers. Everywhere it waters, purifies. It does good to, and is useful to, all. It always obeys and never resists. If one places a barrage in its way, it stops; if one opens a lock gate, it flows. It adapts itself equally to any container, round, square, or otherwise. - The inclination of men is quite the opposite. They naturally love to profit themselves. They should imitate water. Whomsoever should lower himself to serve others, will be loved by all, and will not suffer any contradiction.'*

### Chapter 9. Text.

A. To hold a vase filled to the brim, without spilling anything, is impossible; better not to fill it so. To keep an over-sharpened blade without its edge becoming blunt, is impossible; better not to sharpen it to this extreme. To keep a roomful of precious stones, without any of it being misappropriated, is impossible; better not to amass this treasure. No extreme can be maintained for a long time. Every height is followed by a decline. Likewise for man.

- B. Whomsoever, having become rich and powerful, takes pride in himself, prepares thereby his own ruin.
- C. To retire at the height of one's merit and fame, that is the way of heaven.

### Summary of commentaries.

*A completely full vase spills at the slightest movement, or loses its contents through evaporation. An over-sharpened blade loses its edge through the effects of the atmosphere. A treasure will inevitably be stolen or confiscated. When the sun reaches the zenith, it declines; when the moon is full, it begins to wane. The point which has reached the highest on a turning wheel, redescends as quickly. Whomsoever has understood this universal, ineluctable law of diminution necessarily following augmentation, gives in his notice, retires, as soon as he realizes that his fortune is at its height. He does this, not from fear of humiliation, but from a wise concern for his conservation, and above all in order to unite himself perfectly with the intentions of destiny... When he is aware that the time has come, says one of the commentators, the Sage cuts his links, escapes from his cage, and leaves the world of vulgarities. As is written in the Mutations, he no longer serves his prince, because his heart is set on higher things. Likewise did so many Daoists, who retired to private life at the height of their fortune, and ended up in voluntary obscurity.*

### Chapter 10. Text.

- A. Keep your body and spermatic soul closely united, and ensure that they do not become separated.
- B. Apply yourself such that the air you breathe in, converted into the aerial soul, animates this composite, and keeps it intact as in a new-born baby.
- C. Withhold yourself from considerations which are too profound, in order not to wear yourself out.
- D. As for love of the people and anxiety for the state, limit yourself to non-action.
- E. Let the gates of heaven open and close, without wishing to do something, without interfering.
- F. Know all, be informed on everything, and for all that remain indifferent, as if you knew nothing.
- G. Produce, breed, without taking credit for what has been produced, without exacting a return for your actions, without imposing yourself on those you govern. There you have the formula for transcendent action.



### Summary of commentaries.

*Man has two souls, a double principle of life. First 'pai', the soul coming from the paternal sperm, the principle of becoming and development of the foetus in the maternal womb. The more closely that this soul clings to the body, the healthier and stronger is the new being. After birth, the absorption and condensation of air produces a second soul, the aerial soul, principle of subsequent development, and above all, of survival. In opposition to the rigidity of a corpse, flexibility here signifies life. The newly born child is, for the Daoists, the ideal perfection of nature, still absolutely intact, and without any mixture. Later on this infant will be interpreted as an interior transcendent being, the principle of survival. Illness, excess, weakens the union of the spermatic soul with the body, thus bringing on the illness. Study, worry, wears out the aerial soul, thereby hastening death. Maintenance of the corporeal component of the aerial soul, through cleanliness, rest, and therapeutic respiration, makes the programme of the life of the Daoist. - For G, compare with chapter 2, C,D.*

### Chapter 11. Text.

- A. A wheel is made of thirty perceptible spokes, but it turns due to the imperceptible central axis of the hub.
- B. Vessels are made of perceptible clay, but it is their imperceptible hollow that is useful.
- C. The imperceptible holes which make the doors and windows of a house, are its essentials.
- D. It is the imperceptible that produces effects and results.

### Summary of commentaries.

*This chapter is connected with paragraphs A and B of the preceding chapter. Man does not live by his perceptible body, but by the two imperceptible souls, the spermatic and the aerial. Therefore the Daoist takes care above all of these two invisible entities. The common people either disbelieve in them or pay little attention to them, because they are invisible. They are preoccupied with perceptible, material things. Now in many perceptible beings, says the text, the useful, the effective, is what they have of the imperceptible, their hollow, a void, a hole. The commentators generalize in saying: Everything effective comes from a void; a being is only effective through its emptiness. It seems that the ancient wheels had thirty spokes because the month has thirty days.*

## Chapter 12. Text.

A. Colours blind the eyes of man. Sounds make him deaf. Flavours exhaust his taste. Hunting and racing, by unchaining savage passions in him, madden his heart. The love of rare and difficult-to-obtain objects pushes him to efforts that harm him.

B. Therefore the Sage looks to his stomach, and not his senses.

C. He renounces this, in order to embrace that. (He renounces what causes wear, in order to embrace what conserves).

### Summary of commentaries.

*This chapter is connected with the preceding one. The stomach is the void, therefore the essential and effective part of man. It looks after the human composite and all its parts, through digestion and assimilation. It is therefore the object of judicious care for the Daoist Sage. We can understand from this why bellies are so esteemed in China, and why the Daoist Sages are often represented with pot-bellies. On the contrary, the Sage carefully abstains from application of the senses, exercise of the mind, curiosity; in fact any activity or passion that wears out the two souls and the composite.*

## Chapter 13. Text.

A. Favour, because it can be lost, is a source of worry. Greatness, because it can be ruined, is a source of fear. What do these two sentences mean?

B. The first means that the care required to keep in favour, and the fear of losing it, fill the mind with worry.

C. The second points out that ruin generally comes from caring too much for one's own greatness. He who has no personal ambition does not have to fear ruin.

D. He who is only concerned about the greatness of the empire (and not that of himself), he who only desires the good of the empire (and not his own good), to him the empire should be confided (and it would be in good hands).

### Summary of commentaries.

*A continuation of the preceding chapter citing other causes of wear, and other precautions to be taken to avoid them. For those who are in favour, who occupy important positions, the worry of holding on to these wears out body and soul, because they are strongly attached to their favour and position. Many of the Daoist Sages were honoured by the favour of great persons and occupied high positions without personal inconvenience, so detached*

were they from any affection for their situation. They desired not so much to hold on to their positions as to see their resignations accepted. Men of this kind can be emperors, princes, or ministers, without detriment to themselves, and without detriment to the empire, which they govern with the highest and most complete disinterest. The text of this chapter is faulty in many modern editions.

#### Chapter 14. Text.

**A.** Looking, one does not see it, for it is invisible. Listening, one does not hear it, for it is silent. Touching, one does not feel it, for it is impalpable. These three attributes must not be separated, for they designate one and the same being.

**B.** This being, the Principle, is not light above and dark below, as are opaque material bodies. Like a slender thread, it unwinds itself (as continuous existence and action). It has no name of its own. It goes back as far as the time when there were no other beings but itself. It has no parts; from in front one sees no head, from behind no rear.

**C.** It is this primordial Principle that has ruled, and rules, all beings right up to the present. Everything that has been, or is, since the ancient origin, is from the unwinding of the Principle.

#### Summary of commentaries.

*The first thirteen chapters form a series. Here the author goes back to the beginning. A new description of the Principle, so tenuous as to be imperceptible; formless; indefinite, infinite being; that which was before everything; that which caused everything. A picturesque description of 'de', its continuous and varying productive action, using the metaphore 'ji', the unwinding of a spool. The meaning is clear: The diverse products of the Principle are the manifestations of its virtue; the infinite chain of these manifestations of the Principle can be called the unwinding of the Principle. - This important chapter does not present any difficulty.*

#### Chapter 15. Text.

**A.** The ancient Sages were subtle, abstract, profound, in a way that cannot be expressed in words. Therefore I am going to use illustrative comparisons in order to make myself as clearly understood as possible.

**B.** They were circumspect like one who crosses an ice-covered river; prudent like one who knows that his neighbours have their eyes on him; reserved like a guest in front of his host. They

were indifferent like melting ice (which is neither one thing nor the other). They were unsophisticated like a tree trunk (the rough bark of which conceals the excellent heartwood). They were empty like a valley (with reference to the mountains that form it). They were accommodating like muddy water, (they, the clear water, not repelling the mud, not refusing to live in contact with the common people, not forming a separate group). C. (To seek purity and peace by separating from the world is to overdo things. They can be found in the world). Purity is to be found in the trouble (of this world) through (interior) calm, on condition that one does not let the impurity of the world affect oneself. Peace is to be found in the movement (of this world) by one who knows how to take part in this movement, and who is not exasperated through desiring that it should be stopped.

D. He who keeps to this rule of not being consumed by sterile desires arising from his own fancy, will live willingly in obscurity, and will not aspire to renew the world.

### Summary of commentaries.

*Zhang Hongyang explains as follows the last paragraph (D), which is somewhat obscure because of its extreme conciseness: He will remain faithful to the ancient teachings, and will not allow himself to be seduced by new doctrines. This explanation seems only just tenable.*

### Chapter 16. Text.

A. He who has reached the maximum of emptiness (of indifference) will be firmly fixed in peace.

B. Innumerable beings come out (from non-being), and I see them return there. They spring forth, then they all return to their root.

C. To return to one's root, is to enter into the state of rest. From this rest they emerge for a new destiny, and so it goes on, continually, without end.

D. To recognize this law of immutable continuity (of the two states of life and death), is wisdom. To ignore it, is foolish. Those ignorant of this law cause misfortune (through their untimely interference in things).

E. He who knows that this law weighs heavily on beings, is just (treats all beings according to their nature, with equity), like a King, like Heaven, like the Principle. In consequence he lasts until the end of his days, not having made himself any enemies.

### Summary of commentaries.

*Immutability is an attribute of the Principle itself. Beings participate in it, in proportion to their acquired resemblance to the Principle. The absolutely indifferent Daoist Sage, being the one who is most like the Principle, is in consequence the most immutable. - Except for the Principle, all beings are submitted to the continual alternation of the two states of life and death. The commentators call this alternation the coming and going of the shuttle on the cosmic loom. Zhang Hongyang compares it with breathing, active inspiration corresponding to life, passive exhalation corresponding to death, the end of one being the beginning of the other. The same author uses, as a term of comparison, the lunar cycle, the full moon representing life, the new moon representing death, with two intermediate periods of waxing and waning. All this is classical, and can be found in all the Daoist Writings.*

### Chapter 17. Text.

- A. In the early days (when, in human affairs, everything still conformed to the action of the Principle), subjects scarcely knew they had a prince (so discreet was the action of the latter).  
B. After this the people loved and flattered their prince (because of his good deeds), but later on, they feared him (because of his laws), and scorned him (because of his unjust acts). They became disloyal, through having been treated disloyally. They lost confidence in him through receiving only good words which were never put into effect.  
C. How delicate was the touch of the ancient rulers. When everything prospered under their administration, the people believed they had done everything themselves, of their own free will.

### Summary of commentaries.

*The meaning is obvious and the commentators are all in agreement. This utopia of imperceptible government, without rewards and without punishments, haunted the minds of Chinese intellectuals up to fairly recent times.*

### Chapter 18. Text.

- A. When action conforming to the Principle dwindles, (when men cease to act with spontaneous goodness and fairness), artificial principles of goodness and fairness, prudence and wisdom (are invented). These artificial principles soon degenerate into politics.  
B. When parents no longer live in natural harmony, they try to

make up for this deficit by inventing artificial principles of filial piety and paternal affection.

C. When states had fallen into disarray, they invented the loyal minister stereotype.

### Summary of commentaries.

*Conventional morality, with its principles and precepts, useless in the age of spontaneous goodness, was invented when the world fell into decadence, as a remedy for that decadence. The invention was somewhat unfortunate. The only true remedy would have been to return to the original Principle. - This marks Lao Zi's declaration of war on Confucius. All the Daoist writers, Zhuang Zi in particular, have declaimed against artificial goodness and fairness, the passwords of Confucianism.*

### Chapter 19. Text.

A. Reject (artificial, conventional, political) wisdom and prudence, (in order to return to primal natural uprightness), and the people will be a hundred times happier.

B. Reject (artificial, conventional) goodness and fairness, (filial and fraternal piety), and the people will come back (for their well-being, to natural goodness and fairness), to spontaneous filial and paternal piety.

C. Reject art and gain, and evildoers will disappear. (With the primordial simplicity, they will return to primordial honesty).

D. Renounce these three artificial categories, for the artificial is good-for-nothing.

E. Be attached to simplicity and naturalness. Have few personal interests, and few desires.

### Summary of commentaries.

*This chapter follows the preceding one. It is perfectly clear. The commentators are in agreement. This material is developed at length by Zhuang Zi.*

### Chapter 20. Text.

A. Give up learning, and you will be free from all your worries. What is the difference between yes and no (about which the rhetoricians have so much to say)? What is the difference between good and evil (on which the critics never agree)? (These are futilities that prevent the mind from being free. Now freedom of mind is necessary to enter into relation with the Principle).

B. Without doubt, among the things which common people fear,

there are things that should be feared; but not as they do, with a mind so troubled that they lose their mental equilibrium.

C. Neither should one permit oneself to lose equilibrium through pleasure, as happens to those who have a good meal or view the surrounding countryside in spring from the top of a tower (with the accompaniment of wine, etc.).

D. I (the Sage) seem to be colourless and undefined; neutral as a new-born child that has not yet experienced any emotion; without design or aim.

E. The common people abound (in varied knowledge), but I am poor (having rid myself of all uselessness) and seem ignorant, so much have I purified myself. They seem full of light, I seem dull. They seek and scrutinize, I remain concentrated in myself. Indeterminate, like the immensity of the oceans, I float without stopping. They are full of talent, whereas I seem limited and uncultured.

F. I differ thus from the common people, because I venerate and imitate the universal nourishing mother, the Principle.

### Summary of commentaries.

*The text of this chapter differs in different editions; it must have been mutilated or retouched. The commentaries also differ greatly from each other. The lack of clarity comes, I think, from the fact that Lao Zi, speaking of himself, and proposing himself as a model for the disciples of the Principle, would not have wished to speak more clearly. Zhang Hongyang seems to me to have best interpreted his thought.*

### Chapter 21. Text.

A. All of the beings which play a role, in the great manifestation of the cosmic theatre, have come from the Principle, through its virtue (its unwinding).

B. The Principle is indistinct and indeterminate, mysterious and obscure. In its indistinction and indetermination there are types, a multitude of beings. In its mystery and obscurity there is an essence which is reality.

C. From ancient times until the present, its name (its being) has stayed the same, all beings have come from it.

D. How do I know that it was the origin of all beings?... (By objective observation of the universe, which reveals that contingencies must have come from the absolute).

### Summary of commentaries.

*This elevated chapter is not obscure, and the commentators*

*agree with each other. All of these ideas have already been stated. Lao Zi has gone back to the definition of the Principle and its Virtue, and here he has restated his ideas with greater clarity and precision.*

## Chapter 22. Text.

A. In the old days they said, the incomplete shall be made whole, the bent shall be straightened, the empty shall be filled, the worn shall be renewed. Simplicity makes for success, multiplicity leads one astray.

B. Therefore the Sage who holds himself to unity, is the model for the empire, (for the world, the ideal man). He shines, because he does not show off. He imposes himself because he does not claim to be right. One finds merit in him, because he does not brag. He increases constantly, because he does not push himself. As he does not oppose himself to anyone, no one is opposed to him.

C. The axioms from the old days cited above, are they not full of sense? Yes, towards him who is perfect, (who does nothing to attract to himself), all run spontaneously.

## Summary of commentaries.

*The meaning is clear. To hold oneself to unity is, says Zhang Hongyang, to forget all things, in order to concentrate oneself on the contemplation of original unity.*

## Chapter 23. Text.

A. To talk little, to act only without effort, that is the formula.

B. A gusty wind does not blow all morning, torrential rain does not last all day. And yet these effects are produced by heaven and earth, (the most powerful agents of all. But these are exaggerated, forced, effects, that is why they cannot be sustained). If heaven and earth cannot sustain a forced action, how much less is man able to do so?

C. He who conforms himself to the Principle, conforms his principles to this Principle, his action to the action of this Principle, his non-action to the non-action of this Principle. Thus his principles, his actions, his non-action, (speculations, interventions, abstentions), always give him the contentment of success, (for, whether he succeeds or not, the Principle evolves, and therefore he is content).

D. (This doctrine of the abnegation of one's opinions and one's actions appeals to the taste of but few people). Many only believe in it a little, the others not at all.



**Summary of commentaries.**

*The meaning is clear and the commentators are in agreement. The text of this chapter is highly incorrect in modern editions, having been touched up unintelligently.*

**Chapter 24. Text.**

**A.** By dint of holding oneself on tiptoe, one loses one's balance. By trying to take too great a stride, one does not go forward. By making a show of oneself, one loses one's reputation. Through imposing oneself, one loses one's influence. Through boasting about oneself, one becomes discredited. Through pushing oneself, one ceases to be augmented.

**B.** In the light of the Principle all these ways of acting are odious, distasteful. They are superfluous excesses. They are like a pain in the stomach, a tumour in the body. He who has principles (in conformity with the Principle), does not act like this.

**Summary of commentaries.**

*This chapter continues the theme of the two preceding ones. The meaning is clear. The commentators are in agreement. Excess destroys natural simplicity.*

**Chapter 25. Text.**

**A.** There is a being, of unknown origin, which existed before heaven and earth; imperceptible and undefined, unique and immutable, omnipresent, the mother of everything there is.

**B.** I do not know it by its own name. I designate it by the word Principle. If it were necessary to name it, one would call it the Great, great going forth, great distance, great return. (The principle of the great cyclic evolution of the cosmos, of the becoming and ending of all beings).

**C.** The name Great befits (proportionally) four (superimposed) beings: The emperor, the earth, heaven (the classical Chinese triad), and the Principle. The emperor owes his greatness to the earth (his theatre), earth owes its greatness to heaven (of which it is the fruit), heaven owes its greatness to the Principle (of which it is the principal agent). (Greatness borrowed, as one can see, whereas) the Principle owes its essential greatness to its underived, uncreated, existence.

**Summary of commentaries.**

*A famous chapter; compare it with chapter 1. The serious commen-*

tators are in agreement, the verbose ones scoff. The Principle is called the mother of all that is, considered as the source of being of all that is. Being formless, and without any accident on to which one can hang a qualification, it cannot be named. The only terms properly applicable to it are Indefinite Being, or Universal Principle.

### Chapter 26. Text.

A. The heavy is the base (root) of the light. Stillness is the prince of movement. (These things should always be united in a just temperament).

B. Therefore a wise prince, when he travels (in his light carriage), never separates himself from the heavy wagons which carry his baggage. However beautiful the landscape through which he passes, he takes care to lodge only in peaceful places.

C. Alas, how could an emperor behave so foolishly, losing all authority by dint of frivolity, and all rest through his waywardness?

### Summary of commentaries.

*Historic allusion to Emperor You Wang, or to another, one is not exactly sure. The commentators are of the opinion that this chapter is only an exhortation to orderly behaviour. The wording varies in the last paragraph, in many editions.*

### Chapter 27. Text.

A. A good walker leaves no trace, a good speaker offends no one, a good reckoner needs no tally, an expert locksmith can make one that no one can open, an expert on knots can make them so that no one can untie them. (All specialists have their speciality, which makes their fame, from which they take their profit).

B. Likewise the Sage (Confucian politician), the professional saviour of men and things, has his own procedures. He considers himself the born master of other men, regarding them as material born for his craft.

C. Now that is to blind oneself, (to shade out the light, the Daoist principles). Not wishing to rule, nor to appropriate, others; although wise, seeming like a madman (persisting to live in retreat); this is the essential truth.

### Summary of commentaries.

*Translated after Zhang Hongyang who pointed out, rightly, that almost all of the commentators are wrong about the interpretation*

*of this chapter. - The clear opposition of the Confucian and the Daoist. The first dreams only of a post which gives him authority over men, the second protects himself as much as he can from such positions.*

### **Chapter 28. Text.**

**A.** Being aware of one's virile strength (knowing that one is a cock), and yet holding oneself willingly in the inferior state of the female (of the hen); keeping oneself willingly in the lowest place in the empire... To demean oneself thus shows that one has retained the primordial virtue, (absolute disinterestedness, participation in the Principle).

**B.** Knowing oneself to be enlightened, and willingly passing oneself off as ignorant; willingly letting oneself be walked over... To behave thus is to show that the primordial virtue has not wavered in oneself, that one is still united with the first Principle.

**C.** Knowing oneself worthy of fame, yet staying in voluntary obscurity; willingly making oneself the valley (the lowest point) of the empire... To behave thus is to show that one has the original self-sacrifice still intact, that one is still in the state of natural simplicity.

**D.** (The Sage will refuse therefore the burden of being a governor. If he is constrained to accept such a post, then he will remind himself that) the multiplicity of beings have come from the primordial unity by a scattering. (That he will never busy himself with these diverse beings), but govern as chief of the officials (as prime mover), uniquely applying himself to general government, without occupying himself with details.

### **Summary of commentaries.**

*This chapter is associated with paragraph C of the preceding chapter. It clearly describes a Daoist style Olympian government. The next chapter continues this theme.*

### **Chapter 29. Text.**

**A.** He who holds the empire would, in my view, be wishing for failure should he want to manipulate it (to act positively, to govern actively). The empire is a mechanism of extreme delicacy. It should be let go all alone. It should not be touched. He who touches it, deranges it. He who wishes to appropriate it, loses it.

**B.** When he governs, the Sage lets all people (and their sum, the empire) go free according to their several natures, the agile and the slow, the ardent and the apathetic, the strong and the

weak, the long-lived and the short-lived.

C. He limits his action to the suppression of excesses which would harm the whole, such as power, wealth, and ambition.

### Summary of commentaries.

*Zhang Hongyang calls this suppression of excesses the only intervention permitted to the Daoist; action in non-action.*

### Chapter 30. Text.

(Of all the excesses, the most prejudicial, the most damnable, is that of weapons, war).

A. Those who act as advisors to a prince should keep themselves from wanting to make war against a country. (For such action, calling for revenge, is always paid for dearly). Wherever the troops stay the land produces only thorns, having been abandoned by the farm workers. Wherever a great army has passed, years of unhappiness (from famine and brigandage) follow.

B. Therefore the good general is content to do only what he has to do, (the least possible; moral, rather than material repression). He stops as soon as possible, guarding himself from exploiting his force to the limit. He does as much as is required (to re-establish peace), not for his personal advantage and fame, but from necessity and with reluctance, without any intention of increasing his power.

C. Any height of power is always followed by decadence. Making oneself powerful is therefore contrary to the Principle (the source of duration). He who is lacking on this point, will not be long in coming to an end.

*Literal commentaries. No controversy.*

### Chapter 31. Text.

A. The best weapons are ill-omened instruments that all beings hold in fear. Therefore those who conform themselves to the Principle do not use them.

B. In times of peace, the prince puts the civil minister he honours on his left (the place of honour); but even in times of war, he puts the military commander on his right (which is not the place of honour, even though he is exercising his function).

Weapons are disastrous instruments. A wise prince uses them only with reluctance and from necessity. He prefers always a modest peace to a glorious victory.

No one should think that victory is a good thing. He who thinks that, shows that he has the heart of an assassin. Such a man would not be fit to reign over the empire.

C. According to the rites, those of good omen are placed on the left, those of ill-omen on the right. (Now when the emperor receives two military officers together), the one of subordinate rank (who only acts on superior orders, and is therefore less ill-omened) is placed on the left. The commanding officer is placed on the right, that is, in the first place according to the funeral rites, (the place of chief mourner). For it behoves one who has killed many men to weep tears of lamentation for them. The only place really fitting for a conquering general is that of chief mourner (leading the mourning for those whose death he has caused).

*Literal commentaries. No controversy.*

### Chapter 32. Text.

A. The Principle has no name of its own. It is nature. This nature so unmanifest is stronger than anything. If princes and emperors were to conform themselves to it, all beings would collaborate with them spontaneously; heaven and earth would act in perfect harmony, sprinkling a sweet dew (the best possible omen); the people would be governable without the need for constraint.

B. When, in the beginning, in this visible world, the Principle imparted itself in the production of (sentient) beings with names, it did not produce them in a way that exhausted itself (but only as tenuous prolongations, its mass remaining intact). The Principle is, with reference to the diversity of beings in the world, like the mass of great rivers and oceans with reference to trickles and rivulets of water.

### Summary of commentaries.

*Each being exists through a prolongation of the Principle in itself. These prolongations are not detached from the Principle, which is not, therefore, diminished in imparting itself. The prolongation of the Principle in each being is the nature of that being. The Principle is universal nature, being the sum of all individual natures, its prolongations.*

### Chapter 33. Text.

A. Knowing others is wisdom, but knowing oneself is superior wisdom, (one's own nature being most hidden and profound).

- Imposing one's will on others is strength; but imposing it on oneself is superior strength (one's own passions being the most difficult to subdue).
- Being satisfied (content with what destiny has given), is true wealth; being master of oneself (bending oneself to the dispositions of destiny) is true character.

**B.** Staying in one's (natural) place (that which destiny has given), makes for a long life. After death, not ceasing to be, is true longevity, (which is the lot of those who have lived in conformity with nature and destiny).

### Summary of commentaries.

*Life and death are two forms of the being. In B it is a question of conscious survival after death.*

### Chapter 34. Text.

**A.** The great Principle extends itself in all directions. It lends itself willingly to the genesis of all beings (its participants). When a work is accomplished, it does not attribute it to itself. It nourishes all beings with kindness, without imposing itself on them as a master (for having nourished them; leaving them free; not exacting any degrading return from them). Because of its constant disinterestedness, one might think it would become diminished. This is not so. All beings to whom it is so liberal, run towards it. It therefore finds itself magnified (through this universal trust).

**B.** The Sage imitates this conduct. He, also, makes himself small (through his disinterestedness and his delicate reserve), and acquires thereby true greatness.

*Nothing more in the commentaries.*

### Chapter 35. Text.

**A.** Because he resembles the great prototype (the Principle, through his disinterested devotion), all come to the Sage. He welcomes them all, does them good, and gives them rest, peace, and happiness.

**B.** Music and good cheer may hold up a passer-by for but a night, (since sensual pleasures are fleeting and leave nothing behind). Whereas the exposition of the great principle of disinterested devotion, simple and gentle, which charms neither the eyes nor the ears, pleases, engraves itself, and is of an inexhaustible fecundity in matters of practical application.

*Nothing more in the commentaries.*

### Chapter 36. Text.

**A.** The beginning of contraction necessarily follows the maximum of expansion. Weakness follows strength, decadence follows prosperity, depravation follows opulence. This is a subtle insight (that many do not wish to see). All preceding strength and superiority

is expiated by subsequent debility and inferiority. More calls for less, excess calls for deficit.

**B.** A fish should not leave the depths (where it lives ignored but in security, in order to show itself at the surface where it could be harpooned). A state should not show its resources (if it does not wish the others to turn against it in order to crush it).

**Summary of commentaries.**

*Stay small, humble, hidden; do not attract attention; this is the secret of living well and for a long time.*

**Chapter 37. Text.**

**A.** The Principle is always non-acting (not acting actively), and yet it does everything (without seeming to participate).

**B.** If the prince and the lords could govern like that (without poking their fingers in it), all beings would become spontaneously perfect (by returning to nature).

**C.** It would only remain to call them back to unnamed nature (to the primordial simplicity of the Principle) each time they showed any tendency to come out of this state (by acting). In this state of unnamed nature there are no desires. When there are no desires all is peaceful, and the state is governed by itself.

*The commentators add nothing. Compare with chapter 3.*

Chapter 38. Text.

A. That which is superior to the Virtue of the Principle (the Principle itself, considered in its essence), does not act, but holds Virtue in a state of immanence within itself. All those which are inferior to the Virtue of the Principle (artificial rules of conduct), are only a palliative for the loss of that Virtue; a palliative with which it has nothing in common.

B. That which is superior to the Virtue (the Principle), does not act in detail. (The artificial rules) which are inferior to the Virtue (of the Principle) only exist for action in detail.

C. When nature, with its natural good instincts, has been forgotten, artificial principles come as palliatives for this deficit. These are, in descending order, goodness, fairness, rites and laws. (Artificial Confucian goodness is superior to artificial fairness which, in struggling to cope with the diverse inclinations of men, has produced rites and laws).

Rites are but a poor expedient to cover up the loss of original uprightness and frankness. They are more a source of trouble (in etiquette and rubric) than they are of order.

The last term of this descending evolution, political wisdom (making laws), was the beginning of all abuses.

D. He who is truly a man, holds himself to uprightness and natural good sense. He is contemptuous of artificial principles. Using discernment, he rejects this (the false), in order to embrace that (the true).

Summary of commentaries.

*This chapter is directed against Confucianism. Total good natural sense, is unity. Artificial moral precepts are multiplicity. The next chapter is going to show that multiplicity ruins, and that unity saves.*

Chapter 39. Text.

A. The following participate in primitive simplicity: Heaven, which owes its luminosity to its simplicity. Earth, which owes its stability to it. The universal generative action, which owes its activity to it. The median space, which owes its fecundity to it. The life common to all beings. The power of the emperor and the princes. (Life and power being emanations of the Principle).

B. What makes them such as they are, is the (primitive) simplicity (in which they participate). If heaven came to lose it, it would fall. If the earth came to lose it, it would lose its stability.



if the generative action lost it, it would cease to act. If the median space lost it, all beings would disappear. If the emperor and the princes should lose it, they would have no more dignity.

C. All elevation, all nobility, is based on abasement and simplicity (characteristics proper to the Principle). Therefore it is right that the emperor and the princes, the most exalted of men, should be designated by the terms, sole, unique, incapable, without them being thereby degraded.

D. (Applying the same principle of simplicity in their government), they should reduce the multitude of their subjects to unity, considering them with a serene impartiality as an undivided mass, not regarding some as precious like jade and others base like stones.

### Summary of commentaries.

*In a total view, as from a great distance, individuals and details are not visible. This chapter completes the theme of the preceding one.*

### Chapter 40. Text.

A. Going back (towards the Principle) is the type of movement characteristic of those who conform themselves to the Principle. Attenuation is the result of their being conformed to the Principle.

B. Considering that all that exists is born of simple being, and that being is born of formless non-being, they tend, in diminishing themselves without cease, to go back to primordial simplicity.

*The commentators add nothing in a clear sense.*

### Chapter 41. Text.

A. When a well-read person of high calibre hears about the return to the Principle, he applies himself to it with zeal. A person of medium calibre applies himself to it indecisively. An inferior person ridicules it. That such a person should ridicule it, is a mark of the truth of this doctrine. The fact that they do not understand it, shows its transcendence.

B. They say in the proverb: Those who have understood the Principle are as if blind; those who tend towards it are as if disoriented; those who have reached it seem like common people. This is because great virtue hollows itself like a valley, the great light voluntarily dims itself, vast virtue seems defective, solid virtue seems incapable. Therefore the Sage hides his qualities beneath a somewhat repulsive exterior.

C. He who goes by these appearances will be quite misled. Like a square so big that its corners are invisible, like an enormous vase that is never finished, like a great meaning hidden in a

feeble sound, like a great shape that cannot be grasped; the Sage resembles the Principle. - Now the Principle is latent and has no name, but through its gentle communication, everything is produced. It is the same, in proportion, for the Sage.

*Nothing more in the commentaries.*

#### Chapter 42. Text.

**A.** When the Principle has emitted its virtue, the latter begins to evolve according to two alternating modalities. This evolution produces (or condenses) the median air (tenuous matter). From tenuous matter, under the influence of the two modalities yin and yang, all sentient beings are produced. Coming out from the yin (from strength) they pass to the yang (to the act), through the influence of the two modalities on matter.

**B.** What men dislike is being alone, unique, incapable, (in obscurity and abasement), and yet emperors and princes are designated by these terms, (which imply humility without debasement). Beings diminish themselves by wanting to augment themselves, and they are augmented through diminishing themselves.

*Nothing more in the commentaries. In A there is no question of the Trinity. Compare A and B with chapter 39 C.*

#### Chapter 43. Text.

**A.** Always and everywhere it is the soft that wears the hard (as water wears stone). Non-being penetrates even where there are no cracks (as in the most homogeneous bodies such as metal and stone). From that I conclude the supreme effectiveness of non-action.

**B.** Silence and inaction - few men come to understand their effectiveness.

*Nothing further in the commentaries.*

#### Chapter 44. Text.

**A.** Is not the body more important than reputation? Is life not of more consideration than wealth? Is it wise to risk a great loss for a small advantage?

**B.** He who is a great lover, wears out (his heart). He who amasses great wealth, heads towards ruin (by theft or confiscation). Whereas he who is modest courts no disgrace; he who is moderate does not perish, but endures.

*Nothing further in the commentaries.*

### Chapter 45. Text.

**A.** Accomplished, beneath an imperfect exterior. Giving, (of himself) without becoming worn out. Filled up, without appearing to be so, and pouring out without being emptied. Very straight, beneath a bent air; most able, behind an awkward appearance; highly perspicacious, with an embarrassed exterior. This is the Sage.

**B.** Movement beats the cold (warms one up), rest overcomes heat (refreshes). The withdrawn life of the Sage rectifies all the empire (strikes at the roots of its depravation).

*The commentaries say this refers to an intense influence, beneath an exterior of inaction.*

### Chapter 46. Text.

**A.** When the Principle reigns (in perfect peace), war horses work in the fields. When the Principle is forgotten, (war horses are the order of the day) and they are raised even in the suburbs of the towns.

**B.** To give in to one's covetousness (and this includes the mania for waging war), is the worst of crimes. Not to know how to control oneself, is the worst of nasty things. The worst of faults is to want more, always. Those who know how to say 'enough is enough', are always content.

*Nothing more in the commentaries.*

### Chapter 47. Text.

**A.** Without going out by the door, one can know the whole world; without looking through the window, one can become aware of the ways of heaven (principles which rule all things). - The further one goes, the less one learns.

**B.** The Sage gets there without having taken a step to reach it. He knows before having seen, through superior principles. He achieves, without having acted, through his transcendent action.

*The commentaries state that total superior knowledge is that of the Sage. Knowledge of details is not worthy of him.*

### Chapter 48. Text.

**A.** By studying, every day one increases (useless and injurious particular notions, in one's memory); by concentrating on the Principle, they are diminished every day. Pushed to the limit, this diminution ends in non-action, (the consequence of the absence of particular ideas).

B. Now there is nothing that non-action (letting things go) cannot sort out. It is through non-action that one wins the empire. To act, in order to win it, results in failure.

*Nothing further in the commentaries.*

#### Chapter 49. Text.

A. The Sage has no definite will of his own, he accommodates himself to the will of the people. He treats the good and the bad equally well, which is the true practice of goodness. He trusts the sincere and the insincere alike, which is the true practice of trust.

B. In this mixed-up world, the Sage is without any emotion, and has the same feelings for all. All men fix their eyes and ears on him. He treats them like children, (Daoist kindness, slightly disdainful).

*Nothing more in the commentaries.*

#### Chapter 50. Text.

A. Men go forth into life, and return in death.

B. Out of ten men, three prolong their life (through cleanliness), three hasten their death (through their excesses), three compromise their life by the attachment they have to it, (and only one stays alive until his term, because he is not attached to it).

C. He who is not attached to his life, does not turn aside to avoid an encounter with a rhinoceros or a tiger; he throws himself into the fray without armour or weapons; and he comes to no harm because he is proof against the rhinoceros horn, the tiger's claws, and weapons of combat. Why is this?.. Because, exteriorized through his indifference, death cannot take a hold on him.

#### Summary of commentaries.

*When the soul is transported outside the body through ecstasy, the body cannot be mortally wounded. The idea seems to be that, for a mortal being, a fatal blow must reach the junction of body and soul. This junction temporarily ceases during ecstasy.*

#### Chapter 51. Text.

A. The Principle gives life to beings, then its Virtue nourishes them, until the completion of their nature, until the perfection of their faculties. Therefore all beings venerate the Principle and its Virtue.

B. No one has the eminence of the Principle and its Virtue conferred on them; they have it always, naturally.

**C.** The Principle gives life; its Virtue gives growth, protects, perfects, matures, maintains, and covers (all beings). When they are born, it does not monopolize them; it lets them act freely, without exploiting them; it lets them grow, without tyrannizing them. This is the action of transcendent Virtue.

*The commentators add nothing.*

### **Chapter 52. Text.**

**A.** That which was, before the beginning of the world, became the mother of the world. He who has reached knowledge of the mother (matter, the body), knows through that her son (the vital spirit which is enclosed in it). He who knows the son (his vital spirit) and conserves the mother (his body), will reach the end of his days without accident.

**B.** If he keeps his mouth and nostrils closed (to prevent evaporation of the vital spirit), he will reach the end of his days without having suffered decadence. Whereas, if he talks a lot and causes himself much worry, he will use up and shorten his life.

**C.** Restricting one's considerations to small things, and one's cares to affairs of little importance, makes the mind clear and the body strong. Concentrating one's intellectual rays in one's intelligence, and not letting mental application harm one's body, is to protect (the mind) and to make for long (life).

### **Summary of commentaries.**

*This is an obscure text, but the commentators are in agreement. This is the basis of Daoist breathing therapy.*

### **Chapter 53. Text.**

**A.** He who has a little wisdom, should conform himself to the great Principle. He should take great care to avoid any irksome boasting. But to this wide road many prefer the narrow side-tracks. (Few men walk along the way of obscure disinterestedness. They prefer the narrow tracks of their vanity, their own advantage. This is how the princes of these times act).

**B.** When the palaces are too well kept up, the fields go uncultivated and the granaries empty, (because the farm workers are requisitioned for forced labour).

**C.** Dressing magnificently, wearing a sharp sword, stuffing oneself with food and drink, amassing wealth to the extent of not knowing what to do with it (as do the princes of these times), is being like a brigand (who ostentatiously plays with his loot). Such conduct is opposed to the Principle.

*The commentators add nothing.*

Chapter 54. Text.

**A.** He who builds on disinterestedness will not find his work destroyed. He who keeps himself disinterested will not lose what he has. His sons and his grandsons will make offerings to him without interruption (that is to say, they will succeed him and enjoy the fruit of his works).

**B.** First of all one should conform oneself to the Principle; afterwards, this conformity will spread spontaneously, by itself, to one's family, district, principality, and to the empire; (like radiant heat coming from a central hearth).

**C.** Through one's own nature, one understands those of other individuals, and of all individual collectivities such as families, districts, principalities, and the empire.

**D.** How can one know the nature of an entire empire?... By this (through one's own nature).

*The commentators add nothing.*

Chapter 55. Text.

**A.** He who holds in himself perfect Virtue (without lust or anger) is like the new-born child whom the scorpion does not bite, the tiger does not devour, the vulture does not seize, whom all respect.

**B.** A child's bones are weak, its tendons are feeble, but it grasps objects strongly (just as its soul and body are held together by force). He has not yet any notion of the act of generation, and, in consequence, keeps his seminal virtue intact. He cries softly all day long without becoming hoarse, so perfect is his peace.

**C.** Peace makes for durability; he who understands this is enlightened. Whereas any violent excitement, above all lust and anger, wears one out. From this it follows that virility (which man abuses) is succeeded by decrepitude. Intense life is contrary to the Principle, and in consequence prematurely mortal.

Summary of commentaries.

*This chapter condemns lust and anger, as being the greatest causes of decrepitude and premature death.*

Chapter 56. Text.

**A.** He who speaks (much, shows thereby that he) does not know (the Principle).

**B.** He who knows (the Principle), does not speak. He keeps his mouth closed, controls his breathing, blunts his activity, rescues himself from any complication, tempers his light, and mingles with the people. This is mysterious union (with the Principle).

C. No one can attach himself (by doing favours) to such a man, nor repulse him (by treating him badly). He is indifferent to gain or loss, to exaltation or humiliation. Being thus, he is the most noble in the world.

**Summary of commentaries.**

*'Superior to all that seems, he converses with the author of beings.'*  
- Zhang Hongyang.

**Chapter 57. Text.**

A. One can govern with rectitude, one can wage war with competence, but it takes non-action to win and hold the empire.

B. How do I know that this is so? From what I am going to say: The more rules there are, the less people enrich themselves. The more taxes there are, the less order there is. The more ingenious inventions there are, the fewer serious and useful objects there are. The more detailed the penal code, the more thieves abound. Multiplication ruins everything.

C. Therefore the programme of the Sage is quite the contrary. Not acting, and the people amend themselves. Staying peaceful, and the people rectify themselves. Doing nothing, and the people enrich themselves. Wishing for nothing, and the people come back to natural spontaneity.

*The commentators add nothing.*

**Chapter 58. Text.**

A. When the government is simple, the people abound in virtue. When the government is political, the people lack virtue.

B. Good and bad succeed one another, alternately. Who will discern the heights? (of this circular movement, of good and evil. It is very delicate, an excess or a default changing the moral entity). In many the right measure is lacking. In some an exaggerated righteousness degenerates into a mania. In others an exaggerated goodness becomes extravagance. (Points of view changing in consequence. For a long time now, men have thus been crazy.

C. (The Sage takes them as they are). Taking them to task, he is not sharp or cutting. Straight, he is not rude. Enlightened, he does not humiliate.

*The commentators add nothing.*

**Chapter 59. Text.**

A. The essential for co-operation with heaven in the government of men, is to moderate one's action.

B. This moderation should be the prime care. It procures perfect efficacy, which succeeds in everything, even the governing of the empire.

C. He who possesses this mother of the empire (wise moderation), will last a long time. It is called the pivoting root, the solid trunk. It is the principle of perpetuity.

*The commentators add nothing.*

### Chapter 60. Text.

A. To govern a great state, one should act like someone cooking very small fish (very delicately, otherwise they break up).

B. When a state is governed according to the Principle, phantoms do not appear there to harm the people, because the Sage who governs does not harm the people.

C. The merit of this double tranquillity (on the part of the living and the dead) comes back, therefore, to the Sage.

### Summary of commentaries.

*Phantoms are not the souls of the dead. They are, in the moral harmony, like a whirlwind on a calm day. This disorder is produced by the movement of the passions - hatreds and others. It is not produced when the people's minds are calm.*

### Chapter 61. Text.

A. If a great state lowers itself, like those holes in which water accumulates, everyone will come to it. It will be like the universal female (of chapters 8 and 28).

B. In her apparent passivity and inferiority, the female is superior to the male (for it is she who gives birth). On condition of knowing how to lower itself, a great state will win over lesser states, which, in their turn, will lower themselves, seeking its protection.

C. For this to be realized, only one thing is needed, but it is essential. It is that the great state deigns to lower itself before the lesser ones. (If it is proud and hard, there is no hope).

*Nothing further in the commentaries.*

### Chapter 62. Text.

A. The Principle is the palladium of all beings. It is the treasure of the good (that by which they are good), and the salvation of the wicked (that which prevents them from perishing).

B. It is to it that one should be grateful for affectionate words, and the noble conduct of good people. It is with regard to it, that the wicked should not be rejected.



C. It is for that reason (for the conservation and development of the part of the Principle which is in all beings) that the emperor and the great ministers were instituted. Not so that they should become complacent with their sceptre and their ancient four-horsed chariot; but in order that they should meditate on the Principle (advancing themselves in their knowledge, and in the development of others).

D. Why did the ancients make so much of the Principle? Is it not because it is the source of all good and the remedy for all evil? It is the most noble thing in the world.

*The commentators add nothing.*

### Chapter 63. Text.

A. To act without acting; to be busy without being busy; to taste without tasting; to look equally on the great, the small, the many and the few; to be indifferent to thanks and reproaches; this is how the Sage acts.

B. He only sets about difficult complications through their easiest details, and only applies himself to great problems in their weak beginnings.

C. The Sage never undertakes anything great, and that is why he makes great things. He who promises much, cannot keep his word; he who embarrasses himself with too many things, even easy things, never succeeds in anything.

D. The Sage keeps clear of difficulty, therefore he never has any difficulties.

*The commentators add nothing.*

### Chapter 64. Text.

A. Peaceful situations are easily controlled; problems are easily forestalled before they arise; weak things are easily broken; small things are easily dispersed. One should take one's measures before something happens, and protect order before disorder bursts out.

B. A tree which one's arms can barely embrace comes from a shoot as fine as a hair; a nine-storey tower begins with a pile of earth; a long journey begins with a single step.

C. Those who make too much of things, spoil their affairs. Those who grip too strongly, end up by letting go. The Sage who does not act, does not spoil any affair. Since he holds on to nothing, nothing escapes him.

D. When the common people have affairs, they often fail at the moment when they should have succeeded, (nervousness at the beginning of success making them lose propriety and make clumsy mistakes). For success, the circumspection of the beginning should last until the final achievement.

E. The Sage desires nothing. He does not prize any object because it is rare. He does not attach himself to any system, but instructs himself by the faults of others. In order to co-operate with universal evolution, he does not act, but lets things go.

*The commentators add nothing.*

#### Chapter 65. Text.

A. In antiquity, those who conformed themselves to the Principle did not seek to make the people clever, but aimed at keeping them simple.

B. When people are difficult to govern, it is because they know too much. Those who claim to procure the good of a country by disseminating instruction, are wrong, and ruin the country. Keeping the people in ignorance, makes for the salvation of a country.

C. This is the formula of mysterious action, of great profundity, of great bearing. It is not to the taste of (the curious) but, thanks to it, everything turns out well, peacefully.

*Compare with chapter 3 B. Nothing further in the commentaries.*

#### Chapter 66. Text.

A. Why are the oceans and rivers kings of all the valleys? (receiving all the watercourses in tribute). Because they are benevolently the inferiors of all the valleys (with regard to levels). That is why all the water flows towards them.

B. Following this example, the Sage who wishes to become superior to the common people should speak in words beneath himself (speak very humbly of himself). If he wishes to become the first, he should put himself in the last place, (and continue to do so, after he has been exalted). He could then be elevated to the highest peak without the people feeling oppressed by him; he could be the first, without the people complaining about him. The whole empire would serve him with joy, without becoming weary of him. For, not being opposed to anyone, no one would be opposed to him.

*Compare with chapter 8. The commentators add nothing.*

#### Chapter 67. Text.

A. Everyone says the Sage is noble, despite his common air; an air which he gives himself because he is noble (to hide his nobility and not to attract envy to himself). Everyone knows, on the contrary, how much those who pose as nobles are men of little worth.

B. The Sage prizes three things and holds on to them: charity, simplicity, and humility. Being charitable, he will be brave (within just limits, without cruelty). Being simple, he will be liberal (within just limits, without waste). Being humble, he will govern

men without tyranny.

C. The men of today have forgotten charity, simplicity, and humility. They prize war, ostentation, and ambition. This is like wishing not to succeed. It is like wishing to perish.

D. For it is the charitable aggressor who wins the battle (not the savage aggressor); it is the charitable defender who is impregnable (and not the pitiless warrior). Those whom heaven wishes well, are thereby made charitable.

*Simplicity and humility are treated elsewhere, in chapters 75, 77, and 78.*

#### Chapter 68. Text.

A. He who commands should not think that tactics, valour, and effort give victory.

B. It is by putting oneself at the service of men that one subdues them. That is the correct procedure. It is sometimes formulated as follows: art of not struggling (of accommodating oneself, of winning by making oneself everything to everyone); of ability to manage men; of action conforming to that of heaven. All these formulae designate the same thing. They show the greatness of the ancients.

*The commentators add nothing.*

#### Chapter 69. Text.

A. Rather be on the defensive than the offensive, rather retreat a step than advance an inch, are current principles of military art. It is worth more to yield than to triumph. Prevention (of war) through diplomacy is worth even more.

B. That is the meaning of certain abstruse formulae of military art, such as: advancing without marching; defending oneself without moving an arm; status quo without fighting; holding on without weapons; and others.

C. There is no worse curse than a war waged with little or no reason, (which is sought-after deliberately, and pushed beyond necessary limits). He who does that, exposes his own goods to loss, and causes great mourning.

*Continuation of the preceding chapter. The commentators add nothing.*

#### Chapter 70. Text.

A. What I (Lao Zi) teach is easy to understand and to practise, and yet the world neither understands nor practises it.

B. My precepts and procedures derive from a superior principle and procedure, the Principle and its Virtue.

C. The world does not recognize the Principle which directs me, that is why it does not know me. Very few understand me. That makes my glory. It befalls me to be like the Sage who is unrecognized from amongst the common people because of his humble appearance, even though his interior is filled with jewels.

*The commentators add nothing.*

### Chapter 71. Text.

A. Knowing all and believing that one knows nothing, is true knowledge (of a superior kind). Knowing nothing and believing that one knows everything, is the common evil of humans.

B. Seeing this evil as an evil, keeps one away from it. The Sage is exempt from self-conceit, because he dreads it. This fear keeps him from it.

### Summary of commentaries.

*Not-knowing comes under not-acting, for to know is an act, say the Daoists, who, rejecting theories, generalizations, and classifications, admit only to objective apprehension of particular cases.*

### Chapter 72. Text.

A. Those (who expose themselves to danger through curiosity, love of gain, or ambition) should be afraid when they are not afraid. For they are lost.

B. Do not consider your place of birth too restricting, do not become dissatisfied with the condition in which you were born. (Stay what you are and where you are. The effort to seek for better could perhaps cause you to lose your way). One does not become dissatisfied, if one does not wish to become so. (Dissatisfaction is always voluntary, coming from comparing one's situation with another, and having preference for the other).

C. The Sage knows his worth but does not show it, (he does not feel the need to show it off). He respects himself but does not try to be esteemed. He discerns, adopting this, and rejecting that (after the light of his wisdom).

*The commentators add nothing.*

### Chapter 73. Text.

A. Active (warlike) courage procures death. Passive courage (patience, endurance) conserves life. Therefore there are two courages, one harmful, the other beneficial.

B. (Patience and forbearance are always worth more than incisive action, even in government, in politics). For does heaven wish harm,

or not, to this or that man, or nation?... And why?... Who knows? - Therefore the Sage always acts as though embarrassed, (hesitating, making up his mind with difficulty before any active intervention).

C. For the way of heaven (its constant conduct), is not to intervene positively. It wins without fighting. It makes beings obey without giving orders. It makes them come without calling them. It brings everything to its conclusion whilst having the appearance of letting everything drag.

D. The heavenly net catches all. Its mesh is wide, but no one escapes it.

#### Summary of commentaries.

*In D suppose that, through benevolence, the Sage had let a culprit escape the net of human law, the heavenly net would get him. The Sage entrusts himself therefore to heaven, and acts rather less than more, out of fear of acting against the intentions of heaven, or of trespassing on its rights.*

#### Chapter 74. Text.

A. If the people do not fear death, what is the good of trying to control them by the threat of death? If they fear death, then only capture and execute those who cause disorder, turning the others away from doing likewise.

B. (The legalists who are lavish with the death penalty and believe it will sort everything out, are therefore wrong). The servant of death (heaven), kills, (let him do it. Let us not do his work. He alone is capable of it).

C. The man who wants to kill may end up like those who play with the carpenter's tools, and often lose a finger in their play.

#### Summary of commentaries.

*To get something out of men, it is better to treat them benevolently. - This chapter is directed against the legalist school of Fa Jia, who thought only of punishments. It is a fact of experience, say the commentators, that people fear death less than forced labour, for example; and that, as soon as they get carried away, they lose all fear.*

#### Chapter 75. Text.

A. If the people are hungry, it is because the prince eats up excessive sums of money (which he extorts from them).

B. If the people are restive, it is because the prince does too much, (indisposes them by his innovations).

C. If the people expose themselves lightly to death (in hazardous enterprises), it is because he loves life too much, (love of well-being, of pleasure, of fame).

D. He who does nothing in order to live, is wiser than he who harms himself in order to live.

### Summary of commentaries.

*The prince and the people should cultivate simplicity and all will go well. This chapter continues chapter 67. The meaning of D is: He who does not care for wealth or fame is wiser than he who wears himself out and endangers himself for these things.*

### Chapter 76. Text.

A. When a man is born he is supple and weak (but full of life); he becomes strong and powerful, and then he dies.

B. It is the same for plants, delicate (herbaceous) at first, then becoming woody at the time of their death.

C. He who is strong and powerful is marked for death; he who is weak and flexible is marked for life.

D. The great army will be defeated. The great tree will be cut down.

E. Everything that is strong and great is in a poorer situation. The advantage is always with the supple and the weak.

*The oak and the reed of La Fontaine.*

### Chapter 77. Text.

A. Heaven acts (with regard to men) like the archer who, bending his bow, makes the convexities straight and the concavities bulge, diminishing the greater and augmenting the lesser. (Lowering the higher, and raising the lower). It takes away from those who have plenty, and adds to those who have little.

B. Whereas men (bad princes who bleed the people) do quite the opposite, taking away from those who lack (the people), in order to add to those who have in abundance (their favourites)... Any superfluity ought to come back to the empire (to the people), but only he who possesses the Principle is capable of that.

C. The Sage conforms himself to the Principle. He influences without attributing the result to himself. He accomplishes without appropriating his work to himself. He does not claim the title of Sage, (but keeps himself in voluntary obscurity).

*Note - The Chinese bow reverses its shape when drawn.*

### Chapter 78. Text.

A. In this world there is nothing more supple and weak than water; and yet no one, however strong and powerful he may be, can resist its action (corrosion, wear, wave action); and no being can do without it (for drinking, growth, etc.).

B. Is it clear enough that weakness is worth more than strength, that suppleness can overcome rigidity? - Everyone agrees with this; but no one acts according to it.

C. The Sages have said: 'He who rejects neither moral filth nor political evil is capable of becoming the chief of a territory or the sovereign of the empire.' (He who is supple enough to accommodate himself to all that; and not a rigid and systematic person).

D. These words are quite true, even though they offend many.

*The last two chapters link with chapter 67.*

### Chapter 79. Text.

A. When the principle of a dispute has been settled (some accessory grievances) always remain, and things do not return to the state they were in before, (bruises remain).

B. (Therefore the Sage never questions it, despite his right). Keeping his half of the agreement, he does not exact the execution (of what is written).

C. He who knows how to conduct himself after the Virtue of the Principle, lets his written agreements sleep. He who does not know how to conduct himself thus, exacts his due.

D. Heaven is impartial. (If it were capable of some partiality), it would give advantage to good people, (those who act as in C). It would overwhelm them, because they ask for nothing).

*The commentators add nothing.*

### Chapter 80. Text.

A. If I were king of a little state, of a little people, I would take care to use (put in charge) the few dozen capable men that this state would contain.

B. I would prevent my subjects from travelling, by making them fear possible accidental death so much that they would not dare climb into a boat or carriage.

C. I would prohibit all use of weapons.

D. As for writing and calculating, I would oblige them to go back to knotted cords.

E. Then they would find their food tasty, their clothes fine, their houses peaceful, and their manners and customs agreeable.

F. (I would prevent curiosity and communication to the point where) my subjects would hear the noise of the cocks and dogs of the

neighbouring state, but die from old age without having crossed the border and had relationships with the people there.

*The Daoist ideal of the mouse in its cheese.*

### Chapter 81. Text.

A. (I have finished. Perhaps you may find my discourse lacks something, is not very subtle, and is scarcely wise). This is because native frankness does not dress itself up, natural directness avoids quibbling, common sense can dispense with artificial erudition.

B. The Sage does not hoard, but gives. The more he does for men, the more he can do; the more he gives them, the more he has. Heaven does good to all, doing no evil to anyone. The Sage imitates it, acting for the good of all, and opposing himself to no one.

*The commentators add nothing.*

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**CHONG HU CHEN JING****OR****THE TREATISE OF THE TRANSCENDENT MASTER  
OF THE VOID****Chapter 1. Genesis And Transformation.**

**A.** Lie Zi lived forty years in a cottage in the Principality of Zheng without anyone taking any notice of him; without the prince, his ministers and officers, seeing him as anything other than a common man. When famine descended on the land he arranged to emigrate to the land of Wei. His disciples said to him: 'Master, you are going to leave without our knowing if and when you will return. Kindly teach us, before your departure, what you learnt from Master Lin' (Hu Zi). - Lie Zi smiled and said: 'What I learnt from my master?... When he was teaching Bo Hun Wu Ren\*, I grasped something, which I am going to try to tell you. He said that there is a producer that has not been produced, a transformer that is not transformed. This non-produced producer has produced the totality of beings, this non-transformed one, transforms all beings. Since the beginning of production, the producer has not been able to stop producing; since the beginning of transformation, the transformer has not been able to stop transforming. The chain of productions and transformations is therefore uninterrupted, the producer and the transformer producing and transforming without cease. The yin-yang is the producer, (the Principle under its alternating double modality); the cycle of the four seasons is the transformer, (revolution of the heaven-earth binomial). The producer is immobile, the transformer comes and goes. The mobile and the immobile will endure always.'

**B.** In the writings of the Yellow Emperor it is said\*\*: 'The expansive transcendent force which resides in the median space (the virtue of the Principle) does not die. This is the mysterious mother of all beings, whose door is the root of heaven and earth (the Principle), who moves and acts without expenditure or fatigue'... .. This comes back to saying that the producer is not produced, the transformer is not transformed. The producer-transformer produces and transforms, becomes sentient, takes on form, attains intelligence, acquires energy, acts and sleeps, but remains always itself, (the unity of the cosmos, without real distinction). It is

\*A co-disciple; ritual humility; one should not present oneself as the disciple of an illustrious man, out of fear of shaming him.

\*\*Textually Lao Zi chapter 6.

an error to say that distinct beings are produced and transformed, becoming sentient, taking on forms, attaining intelligence, acquiring energy, acting and sleeping.

C. Lie Zi said: 'Analysing the production of the cosmos by the Principle under its double modality of yin and yang, the emergence of the sentient from the non-sentient, the peaceful germ of the generative action of heaven and earth, the ancient Sages distinguished the following stages: great mutation, great origin, great beginning, great flux\*. The great mutation is the stage before the appearance of tenuous matter. (It is the gyration of the two modalities in the indefinite being, in formlessness, in the Principle come out from its absolute immobility). The great origin is the stage of tenuous matter. The great beginning is the stage of palpable matter. The great flux is the stage of plastic matter, of corporeal substances, of actual material beings. - The primitive state when matter was still imperceptible is known also as "Hun lun" which refers to the time when all the beings which were to come later were contained indiscernably, unrecognisably, as in a huge swell. Its ordinary name is "Yi", mutation, because all will come from it by way of transformation. - Starting from the non-sentient and undifferentiated state, beginning by one, the progression passes through seven, going as far as nine\*\*; regression will bring everything back to unity. - Unity was the point of departure of the genesis of sentient beings. This genesis began as follows: The purest and lightest matter rising up became heaven; the less pure and heavy matter descended and became earth; and men came from the best constituted matter remaining in the median space. The essence of all beings was at first part of heaven and earth, from which they all come out successively by way of transformation.'

D. Lie Zi said: 'Taken in isolation, heaven and earth have not every capacity, a Sage has not every talent, a being has not every propriety. Heaven gives life and covers, earth furnishes matter and supports, the Sage teaches and amends, beings have each their own limited qualities. Heaven and earth have each their respective deficits which they compensate reciprocally, the Sage has his defaults which oblige him to have recourse to others, all beings have to help each other. Heaven cannot supplant the earth, the earth cannot replace the Sage, the Sage cannot change the nature of beings, specific beings cannot leave their

\*Correctly, great unwinding, the regular course of things, such as they are, in the world such as it is.

\*\*Seven may refer to the seven heavenly bodies, the seven rectors of Chinese philosophy. Nine is the last of the simple numbers.

state. The action of heaven and earth consists in the alternation of the yin and the yang, the influence of the Sage consists in the inculcation of goodness and fairness, the nature of beings is active or passive; all this is natural and immutable. - Because there are products, there is a producer of these products. There is an author, of corporeal forms, of sounds, of colours, of tastes. The products are mortal, their producer is not. The author of corporeal forms is not corporeal, the one of sounds is not perceptible to the ear, the one of colours is not visible to the eye, the one of tastes is not perceived by taste. Apart from its infinity and immortality, the producer, the author (the Principle), is indeterminate, capable of becoming, in beings, yin or yang, active or passive, expanded or contracted, round or square, agent of life or of death, hot or cold, light or heavy, noble or vile, visible or invisible, black or yellow, bitter or sweet, perfumed or stinking. Deprived of all intellectual knowledge and of all intentional power, it knows all and can do all' (for it is immanent in all that which knows and is able, which is, says the commentary, supreme knowledge and power).

E. When Lie Zi, who was travelling in the Principality of Wei, stopped to eat his food by the wayside, one of his companions picked up an old skull and showed it to him. Lie Zi looked at it and said to his disciple Bai Feng: 'He and I know that the difference between life and death is only imaginary, he through experience, and I through reasoning. He and I know that to cling to life and to fear death is unreasonable, life and death being only two successive phases. Everything passes according to time or circumstance, through successive states, without changing essentially. Thus frogs become quails and quails become frogs, according to whether the conditions are wet or dry. One and the same germ will become a mat of duckweed on a pond, or a carpet of moss on a hill. Manured, the moss becomes the Wu zu plant, of which the root changes into worms and the leaves into butterflies. These butterflies produce a kind of larva which lives around fireplaces, which is called Qu tuo. After a thousand days this Qu tuo becomes the Qian yu gu bird, whose saliva gives birth to the Si mi. This latter changes itself into Shi xi, into Mou rui, into Fu kuan, (all successive forms of the same being, says the commentary). The sheep's liver is transformed into Di gao. Horse blood is transformed into will-o'-the-wisp. Human blood is transformed into sprites. The kestrel becomes a falcon, then a buzzard, then the cycle begins again. The swallow becomes a shellfish, then it becomes a swallow again. The vole becomes a quail, then it becomes a vole again. Gourds, on perishing, produce fish. Old pear trees become hares. Old billy-goats become monkeys. In times of drought, grasshoppers emerge from fish spawn. The

quadruped Lei of the Tan Yüan Mountains is self-fertilised. The Yi bird is fertilised by looking in the water. Da yao insects are all female, and reproduce without male intervention; Zhi fong wasps are all male and reproduce themselves without female intervention. Hou ji is born of a large footprint, Yi yin from a hollow mulberry. The Kui zhao insect is born of water, and the Xi ji of wine. Yang xi and Bu sun plants are two alternating forms. From old bamboo comes the Qing ning insect, which becomes a leopard, then a horse, then a man. Man returns to the craft of weaving (that is to say, that for man, with the coming and going of the shuttle, the series of transformations recommences). All beings come from the great cosmic craft, and return to it again\*.'

F. In the writings of the Yellow Emperor it is said: 'When a substance is projected, it does not produce a new substance, but a shadow; when a sound resonates, it does not produce a new sound, but an echo; when formlessness is dying, it does not produce a new formlessness, but the sentient being.' Each substance will have an end. Heaven and earth are substances, and they will end just as I will; if one can call what is only a change of state, an end. For the Principle, from which everything originates, will not have an end, since it has no beginning, and is not subject to the laws of duration. Beings pass successively through the states of being living and non-living, of being material and non-material. The state of non-living is not produced by non-life, but follows on from the state of life (like its shadow, as mentioned above). The state of non-materiality is not produced by immateriality, but follows from the state of materiality (as its echo, referred to above). This successive alternation is surely inevitable. Each living thing will inevitably cease to live, and it will cease later on, inevitably, to be non-living, and will return of necessity to life. Therefore to wish to make one's life last, and to escape death, is to wish the impossible. - In the human composite, the vital spirit is the contribution of heaven, the body is the contribution of earth. Man begins by the aggregation of his vital spirit with the gross terrestrial elements, and ends by the union of the same spirit with the pure celestial elements. When the vital spirit leaves the body, each of the two components returns to its origin. That is why we have a similar sounding word (gui) for 'dead' and for 'returned.' The dead are, in fact, returned to their own abode (the cosmos). The Yellow Emperor has said: 'The vital spirit returns through its door (in the Principle, - see Lao Zi, chapter 6 C, and elsewhere), the body returns to its

\*This passage perhaps summarizes exotic legends. The commentary stresses that despite the apparent disorder, all forms of transformation are covered, with or without intermediary death.

origin (matter), and the personality is done away.'

G. The life of a man from birth to death, is made up of four great periods of childhood, robust youth, old age, and the time of death. During childhood, with its concentration of energy, the harmony of the complex is perfect, and its functioning is so precise that nothing can harm it. During robust youth, with its high spirits, the blood almost boils over, the imagination is strong and lusty, and the harmony of the complex is no longer perfect, exterior influences making its functioning defective. During the years of old age, there is a calming of imagination and lust, the body is appeased, exterior beings cease to exert a strong hold; and, although there is no return to the perfection of infancy, there is, however, progress over the period of youth. Finally, at the end, through death, man comes to rest, returned to his height, (to his integral perfection, union with the cosmos).

H. Confucius was on his way to Mount Tai Shan. On the plain of Cheng he met a certain Rong Qi, dressed in a deerskin with a piece of string for a belt, playing the lute and singing. 'Master,' he asked him, 'what is it that makes you so full of joy?' - 'I have,' said Rong Qi, 'many subjects of joy. Of all beings, man is the most noble; and I have for my lot the body of a man; that is my first subject of joy. The masculine sex is more noble than the feminine, and I have for my lot a masculine body; that is my second subject of joy. Some die in their mother's womb, before seeing the light of day, others die in their swaddling-clothes before the awakening of their reason; no such thing has happened to me, I have lived for ninety years; and this is my third subject of joy... And why should I be sad? Because of my poverty? - That is the common lot of Sages. Because of death which approaches? - That is the term of every life.' - Confucius said to his disciples: 'This man knows how to console himself.'

I. A certain Lin Lei, over a hundred years old and still wearing a skin at the time of the wheat harvest (because he had no other clothes for this hot season), was singing whilst gleaning for ears of grain. Confucius, who was travelling to Wei, came across him in the country, and said to his disciples: 'Try to enter into conversation with this old man; he could teach us something.'

- Zi Gong went up to Lin Lei, greeted him, and said to him with compassion: 'Master, have you no regrets that you sing thus, whilst doing this beggar's task?' - Lin Lei continued gleaning and humming, without paying any attention to Zi Gong. The latter persisted so that he ended up by looking at him, and saying: 'What regrets should I have?' - 'You should have regrets,' said Zi Gong, 'for not having worked harder and been more ingenious

during your youth and maturity and so made your fortune; for having remained celibate and reaching old age with neither wife nor children; for having to die soon with neither help nor offerings. Having landed yourself in such a state, how can you sing whilst doing this beggar's task?' - 'Because,' said Lin Lei laughing, 'I have taken all my happiness from things which are open to all, and which all detest (poverty, obscurity, etc.). I agree that I have neither applied myself nor been ingenious, and this has saved me from becoming worn out, and it has enabled me to reach my age. I agree, I have remained celibate, and in consequence the prospect of death does not sadden me, nor for the widow and orphans I shall not leave.' - 'But,' said Zi Gong, 'every man loves life and fears death. How can you look on life so cheaply, and be fond of death?' - 'Because,' said Lin Lei, 'death is to life what returning is to going away. When I die here, will I not be reborn elsewhere? And if I am reborn, will it not be in different circumstances? Now as I have only to gain from the change, whatever it may be, would it not be stupid for me to fear death, through which I shall be better off?' - Zi Gong did not clearly understand these words. He reported them to Confucius. 'I had reason to think,' said the latter, 'that we could have learnt something from this man. He knows something, but not all.' (Since he has stopped at the succession of existences, without going on to union with the Principle, which is the ultimate).

**J.** Zi Gong had become bored with studying. He said to Confucius: 'May I take a rest?' - 'There is no place for rest amongst the living,' said Confucius. - 'Then,' said Zi Gong, 'give me some rest without place.' - 'You will find,' said Confucius, 'rest without localization in death.' - 'Then,' said Zi Gong, 'long live death, the repose of the Sage, which the foolish fear quite wrongly.' - 'Now you are initiated,' said Confucius. 'Yes, common people speak of the joys of living, of the honours of old age, of the pangs of death. The reality is that life is bitter, old age is a decadence, and death is repose.'

**K.** Yen Zi said: 'The ancients best of all have understood exactly what death is, the desired repose of the good, the dreaded fatality of the wicked. Death is a returning. That is why the dead are called "the returned ones." Logically one should call the living "those who have come again." - Walking without knowing where one is going is an act of those who have gone astray, at whom one laughs. Alas, nowadays the majority of men have gone astray, ignorant of where they go at death, and no one laughs at them. Should a man neglect his business in order to wander aimlessly, people would say he was crazy. I say the same of those who, forgetting the beyond, immerse themselves in wealth and honours,

even though they are judged sane by the world. No, they have gone astray, only the Sage knows where he is going.'

**L.** Someone asked Lao Zi: 'Why do you hold the void in such great esteem?' - 'The void,' said Lao Zi, 'cannot be held in esteem for itself. It should be esteemed for the peace one finds there. Peace in the void, is a state that cannot be defined. One can come to establish oneself in it, but one can neither take it nor give it. In the old days they tended towards it. Nowadays they prefer the exercise of goodness and fairness, which does not give the same result.'

**M.** In the old days Yu Xiong said: 'The transport of defunct beings, under the action of heaven and earth, is imperceptible. A being that perishes here is born again elsewhere; one that is added here, is subtracted from elsewhere. Prosperity and decadence, becoming and ending, these comings and goings are enchained without the thread of this enchainment being graspable. So imperceptible are the comings of those who arrive and the departures of those who leave, that the universe always presents the same aspect. Just as the changes in a human body, face, skin, and hair, from birth to death, are quotidian, but cannot be noticed from one day to the next.'

**N.** In the land of Qi a man was tormented by the fear that the sky was going to fall on his head and the earth was going to open up under his feet. The fear of this great cataclysm obsessed him to the point where he could not sleep and had lost his appetite. - A friend was moved by his state and took on the task of cheering him up. 'The sky,' he said, 'is not solid. Up there, there are only vapours which come and go, expanding and contracting, and thereby forming the cosmic respiration. That cannot fall.' - 'So be it,' said the worrier; 'but what about the sun, the moon, and the stars?' - 'These heavenly bodies,' said the friend, 'are also only made of luminous gas. If they should fall, they would not have even enough mass to cause a wound.' - 'And if the earth should open up?' asked the worrier. - 'The earth is too big,' said the friend, 'for the footsteps of men to wear it out; and it is too well suspended in space for their impacts to shake it.' - Reassured, the worrier burst out laughing; and the friend, happy to have succeeded in reassuring him, laughed also. - However Chang Lu Zi, having heard this story, criticised the fool and his friend, in these words: 'It may be true that the sky and heavenly bodies are made of light vapours, and the earth of solid supporting matter. But these vapours and this matter are compositions. Who can guarantee that these compositions will never be disintegrated? Given this uncertainty, it

is reasonable to speculate on the eventuality of the ruin of heaven and earth. But it is unreasonable to live in the continual expectation of this ruin. Let us leave the task of moaning over the great collapse to those who will be its contemporaries.' - Having heard this solution, Lie Zi said: 'It would be pushing things too far to affirm that heaven and earth shall be ruined; it would also be going too far to affirm that they shall not be ruined. It is impossible to know with certainty one way or the other. I conclude this from an analogy. The living know nothing of their future state in death, the dead know nothing of their future life to come. Those who come (the living) do not know how their departure (death) will be, those who have left (the dead) do not know how they will come back (to life). If men are incapable of accounting for the phases of their own evolution, how can they account for the crises of heaven and earth?'

O. Shun asked Zheng: 'Can one possess the Principle?' - 'You do not even possess your own body,' said Zheng, 'so how could you possess the Principle?' - 'If I do not possess my body,' said Shun surprised, 'then to whom does it belong?' - 'To heaven and earth, of which it is a particle,' replied Zheng. 'Your life is an atom of the cosmic harmony. Your nature and its destiny are an atom of the universal concord. Your children and grandchildren are not yours, but belong to the great whole, of which they are the offspring. You walk without knowing what pushes you, stop without knowing what fixes you, and eat without knowing how you assimilate. All that you are is but an effect of the irresistible cosmic emanation. So what do you possess?'

P. In the land of Qi a certain Guo was very rich. In the land of Song a certain Xiang was very poor. The poor man went to ask the rich man how he had gained his wealth. 'By stealing,' said the latter. 'At the end of the first year I had the necessary, after two years I had plenty, and at the end of the third year I had become opulent and a person of great distinction.' - Misunderstanding the word 'stealing,' Xiang questioned him no further. Full of joy, he took a holiday and soon set himself to work, climbing walls or breaking through them, laying his hands on anything that suited him. He was soon arrested and had to repay everything. He lost even the little he had before, but was happy to have got off so lightly. In the belief that he had been misled, he went and made bitter reproaches to Guo. - 'How did you go about it?' asked Guo, quite astonished. When Xiang had told him his methods, Guo said: 'Ah, it was not by that kind of theft that I became rich. I stole my wealth from heaven and earth, from the rain, the mountains, and the plains, according to time and circumstances. I appropriated the fruits of nature, wild animals of the plains,



and fish and turtles from the water. Everything I possess I have stolen from nature, but before it belonged to anyone; whereas you have stolen what heaven had already given to other men.' - Xiang went away discontented, thinking Guo had misled him again. He met the Master of the Eastern Suburb and explained his case to him. 'But of course,' said the latter, 'every appropriation is a theft. Even a living being is a theft of a portion of the harmony of the yin and the yang; and every appropriation of a material being is a theft from nature. But one must distinguish theft from theft. Stealing from nature is a common theft committed by everyone, and it is not subject to punishment. Stealing from others is the theft which is subject to punishment. All men live by stealing from heaven and earth, without however being thieves.'

## Chapter 2. Natural Simplicity.

A. The Yellow Emperor reigned for fifteen years, delighting in his popularity, preoccupied with his health, indulging his senses, to the point where he became emaciated and haggard. When he had reigned for thirty years, making continual intellectual and physical efforts to organise the empire and ameliorate the lot of the people, he found himself to be even thinner and more worn out. Then he said to himself, sighing: 'I must have gone too far. If I am unable to do good to myself, how can I do good to all?' - Having said that, the Yellow Emperor abandoned the cares of government, left the palace, got rid of his entourage, deprived himself of all music, and reduced himself to an ordinary frugal state. He shut himself in a remote apartment where, for three months, he applied himself solely to regulating his thoughts and controlling his body. During this seclusion, one day whilst taking his siesta, he dreamt that he was walking in the land of Hua Xu. This land is to the west of Yen Zhou and to the north of Tai Zhou, at I don't know how great a distance from this land of Qi. One can go there neither by boat nor in a carriage; only the flight of the soul can reach it. In that land there is no chief, and everything happens spontaneously. The people have neither desires nor lust, but only their natural instincts. No one loves life or fears death; they all live to their allotted term. There are no friendships or hatreds, no gains or losses, no interests and no fears. Water does not drown them, fire does not burn them. No weapon can wound them, no hand can harm them. They climb into the air as though they were climbing steps, and they stretch themselves out in space as though on a bed. Clouds and mists do not hinder their sight, the noise of thunder does not affect their hearing. Neither beauty nor ugliness moves their hearts, and no height or depth upsets their course. The flight of their souls takes them everywhere. - On his awakening, a peaceful light shone within him. He called his principal ministers, Tian Lao, Li Mu, Tai Shan Ji, and said to them: 'During three months of retreat I have controlled my mind and subdued my body, thinking how I should govern without wearing myself out. I did not find the solution during the waking state; it came to me whilst I was asleep. I know now that the supreme Principle is not reached by positive efforts, (but through abstraction and inaction). The light shines within me, but I cannot explain it any further to you.' - After this dream the Yellow Emperor reigned a further twenty-eight years, (applying the method of letting all things go). The empire became very prosperous, almost as much as the land of Hua Xu. Then the emperor ascended towards the heights. Two centuries later, the people (who missed him) were still calling him back.

B. Mount Gu Ye is to be found on the Island of He Zhou. It is inhabited by transcendent men, who take no food, but breathe air and drink the dew. Their minds are clear like spring water, their complexion is fresh like a young girl's. Some of them are gifted with extraordinary faculties, others are just very wise, without love and without fear. They live peacefully, simply, modestly, finding their needs readily provided for. There, the yin and the yang are always in harmony, the sun and moon shine continuously, the four seasons are regular, wind and rain come as required, the reproduction of animals and the ripening of crops come just right. There are no murderous plagues, no harmful beasts, no phantoms causing illness or death, no apparitions or extraordinary noises, (phenomena which always denote that there is a fault in the cosmic equilibrium).

C. Lie Zi learnt from his master Lao Shang and his friend Bo Gao Zi, the art of riding on the wind (of taking ecstatic trips). Yin Sheng heard of this and went to live with him, intending to learn this art from him and to witness these ecstasies which deprived him of feeling for a considerable time. He asked for the recipe on several occasions, but each time he was put off. Discontented, he asked to take his leave, but Lie Zi did not answer him. Yin Sheng went away, but, as he was still troubled by the same desire he returned to Lie Zi several months later. The latter said to him: 'Why did you leave; and why have you come back?' - Yin Sheng said: 'You had rejected all my requests; I took a dislike to you and left; now I have lost my resentment and have come back.' Lie Zi said: 'I thought you were a better man than that; how can you be so vile? I will tell you now, how I was formed by my master. I entered his house with a friend. I spent three whole years in his house, occupied in controlling my heart and mouth, without his honouring me by a single glance. After five years, as I had progressed, he smiled at me for the first time. At the end of seven years, my progress accentuating, he let me sit on his mat. After nine years of effort I had lost all notion of yes and no, of advantage and disadvantage, of the superiority of my master and the friendship of my co-disciple. Then the specific uses of my several senses were replaced by a general sense; my mind was condensed, whereas my body was rarified; my flesh and bones were liquefied (were etherised); I lost the feeling that I weighed on my seat, that I pressed down on my feet (levitation); at last I left, gone with the wind, to the east, the west, in all directions like a dead leaf blown away, without my being able to ascertain if the wind were carrying me, or if it were I who was bestriding the wind. You can see from that, how long an exercise I had to go through in order to divest myself, to return to nature, and to reach ecstasy. And

you have scarcely lived with a master. You are still so imperfect that you become impatient and angry. The air must still move out of your way, the earth must still support your fat and heavy body, and you wish to climb with the wind through space?' - Yin Sheng retired in confusion, without daring to reply.

D. Lie Zi said to Guan Yin Zi: 'Tell me, please, how the superior man reaches the state where he can pass where there is no opening, go through fire without being burnt, be free from vertigo at great heights?' - 'By conserving,' said Guan Yin Zi, 'his perfectly pure nature; not by any learned or ingenious procedure. I will explain it to you. Everything that has a form, shape, colour, and sound; all such things are beings. Why do these beings oppose each other? Why should they not be subject to an order other than priority in time? Why should their evolution cease with the deposition of their present form? To understand this profoundly, is true science. He who has understood it with a firm basis, will unify his strength, fortify his body, recover his energy, and he will be in communion with universal evolution. His nature will remain in perfect integrity, his spirit in full liberty. He will be free from exterior influences. Should this man, in a state of drunkenness, fall from a carriage, he will not be mortally wounded. Although his bones and joints are like those of other men, the same trauma will not have the same effect on him; because his spirit, being whole, protects his body. Nothing can take hold on the body when the spirit is not moved. The Sage cannot be harmed by any being. He is enveloped in the integrity of his nature, and protected by his freedom of spirit.'

E. Lie Zi was practising archery in the presence of Bo Hun Wu Ren, with a cup of water attached to his left elbow. He drew the bow to its maximum with his right hand, let fly, replaced another arrow, let fly again, and so on, without upsetting the water in the cup. - Bo Hun Wu Ren said to him: 'Your archery is that of an archer wholly occupied with his aim (artificial archery), not that of an archer indifferent to his aim (natural archery). Come up some high mountain with me, to the edge of a precipice, and let's see if you can still keep this presence of mind.' - The two men did so. Bo Hun Wu Ren crouched at the edge of the precipice, his back to the chasm, his heels sticking out into space. (Note that the archer must move himself backwards to tense the bow). Then he greeted Lie Zi according to the rites, before starting to shoot. But Lie Zi, seized with vertigo, was already lying on the ground, the sweat running down to his heels. - Bo Hun Wu Ren said to him: 'The superior man plunges his gaze into the depths of the earth, the heights of the sky, the far-distant horizon, without his mind being moved. It seems to me

that your eyes are haggard, and that, if you were to shoot, you would miss your aim.'

F. The people of Jin had become quite attached to a member of the Fan clan, named Zi Hua, who sought popularity. The Prince of Jin made him his favourite, and listened to him more willingly than his ministers, distributing honours and reprimands at his instigation. Thus those who solicited favours queued up at the door of Zi Hua, who amused himself by making them attack each other verbally, or even physically, in front of him, without in any way being moved by the accidents that happened during these jousts. The public morality of the Principality of Jin suffered from these excesses. - One day He Sheng and Zi Bo, who were returning from a visit to the Fan family, spent a night at a day's journey from the town, in a hostel kept by a certain Shang Qiu Kai (a Daoist). They spoke amongst themselves of what they had just seen. 'This Zi Hua,' they said, 'is all-powerful; he protects or destroys whom he wishes; he enriches or ruins at his pleasure.' Shang Qiu Kai, who could not sleep through cold and hunger, heard this conversation through the archway. The next day, taking some provisions, he went to the town and presented himself at Zi Hua's door. Now those who besieged his door were all people of note, richly dressed and coming by carriage, pretentious and arrogant. When they saw this decrepit old man with a weather-beaten face, badly dressed and with untidy hair, they all looked down on him. They began by treating him with contempt, and ended up by making fun of him in every way. Whatever they did, Shang Qiu Kai remained impassive, lending himself to their fun by smiling. - During these goings-on, Zi Hua, who had led the entire band to a high terrace, said: 'One hundred ounces of gold are promised to the one who will jump down.' - Those who had just been laughing, became afraid. Shang Qiu Kai jumped at once, descended gently like a gliding bird and landed without breaking any bones. 'That's nothing but a piece of luck,' said the band. - Next, Zi Hua led them all to a river bank, at a bend with a great turbulence. 'At this spot,' he said, 'right at the bottom, there is a rare pearl; he who shall retrieve it may keep it.' - Shang Qiu Kai dived in at once and brought up the rare pearl from the bottom of the whirlpool. Then the band began to ask themselves if they were not perhaps involved with an extraordinary being. - Zi Hua had him dressed, and they sat together at a table. Suddenly a fire broke out in a storehouse belonging to the Fan family. 'I shall give,' said Zi Hua, 'to the one who will go into this inferno, all that he can bring out.' - Without changing his expression, Shang Qiu Kai went straight into the fire, and came out without either being burnt or reddened. - Convinced at last that this man possessed transcendent gifts,

the band made their excuses to him. 'We did not know,' they said; 'that is why we showed you no respect. You ignored it, as a deaf or blind person would have done, confirming your transcendence by your stoicism. Will you kindly give us your formula?' - 'I have no formula,' said Shang Qiu Kai. 'I go as my natural instinct pushes me, without knowing why nor how. I came here to look because two of my guests had spoken of you, and the distance was not very great. I completely believed all that you said to me, and acted without second thoughts for my personal safety. I acted therefore under the impulse of my complete and undivided natural instinct. Nothing can oppose one who acts thus, (such action being in the same direction as the cosmic movement). If you had not said anything, I would never have suspected that you had made fun of me. Now that I am aware of it, I am slightly affected. In this state, I would not dare, as I did before, to confront water and fire, for I would not do it with impunity.' - After this lesson, the clients of the Fan family no longer insulted anyone. They got down from their carriages onto the road in order to greet even beggars and veterinaries. - Zai Wo reported this story to Confucius. 'There is no doubt about it,' said the latter. 'Didn't you know that an absolutely simple man moves all beings through his simplicity, touches heaven and earth, propitiates the subtle beings so well, that absolutely nothing can oppose him in the six regions of space, and fire and water do not harm him? If Shang Qiu Kai has been protected by his somewhat enlightened simplicity, how much more will I be protected by my wise rectitude. Remember this.' (Comment of a head of a school).

**G.** The superintendent of pastures for Emperor Xuan, of the Zhou dynasty, had in his service an employee Liang Yang, who was gifted with extraordinary power over wild animals. When he went into their enclosure to feed them, the most difficult to manage, tigers, wolves, and sea eagles, submitted themselves. He could confront them with impunity during the most critical times of rut or lactation, or when enemy species were present. The emperor came to know of this, and believing he was using some charm, ordered Mao Qiu Yuan to make enquiries. Liang Yang said: 'I am a lesser employee. If I possessed a charm, I would not dare to hide it from the emperor. In a few words, here is all my secret: All beings that have blood in their veins experience attractions and repulsions. These passions do not arise spontaneously, but from the presence of their object. It is to this principle that I have stuck during my dealings with ferocious beasts. I never give my tigers living prey, in order not to arouse their passion to kill; nor entire prey, in order not to excite their appetite for tearing up flesh. I judge how they

are disposed according as they are hungry or satisfied. The tiger has this in common with man, that he is fond of those who feed and caress him, and only kills those who provoke him. I therefore watch that I never irritate my tigers, and endeavour on the contrary to please them. This is difficult for men of unstable disposition. My disposition is always the same. Pleased with me, my animals regard me as one of themselves. They forget, in my menagerie, their deep forests, their vast swamps, their mountains and valleys. This is a simple effect of rational treatment.'

H. Yen Hui said to Confucius: 'One day when I was crossing the Shang rapid, I was admiring the extraordinary dexterity of the ferryman, and asked him: "Can one learn this art?" - "Yes," he said. "Anyone who can swim can learn it. A good swimmer will learn it quickly; a good diver would not even need to learn." - I did not dare tell the ferryman that I did not understand what he said. Can you explain it to me, please?' - 'Ah,' said Confucius, 'I have explained that to you often, in other words, and still you do not understand. Listen and remember this time... Anyone who knows how to swim can learn it because he has no fear of water. A good diver knows it without having to learn, because water has become his element and arouses no emotion. Nothing disturbs the exercise of the faculties of one whose interior is untroubled... When the wager is a piece of pottery, the players are composed. When it is money, they become nervous. When it is gold, they lose their heads. Their acquired abilities stay the same, their ability to deploy themselves depends on their freedom from distraction by an exterior object. Any attention paid to an exterior thing troubles or changes the interior.'

I. One day when Confucius was admiring the Lu Liang Cascade, a fall of two hundred and forty feet which produces a boiling torrent over a great distance, so rapid that neither turtle nor fish can swim against it, he perceived a man swimming amongst the swirling waters. Thinking he was in despair and seeking death, he told his disciples to follow along the bank in order to pull him out should he pass within reach. Now, several hundred paces further down, this man came out of the water himself, undid his hair in order to dry it, and proceeded along the bank at the foot of the cliff, humming. Confucius reached him and said: 'When I saw you swimming in the torrent, I thought you wished to end your life. Then, seeing the ease with which you came out of the water, I took you for a transcendent being. But no, you are a man, of flesh and blood. Tell me, I beg you, the means of sporting oneself thus in the water.' - 'I don't know the means,' said the man. 'When I began, I applied myself to the task; later it became easy for me, and at last I could do it naturally, uncon-

sciously. I allow myself to be drawn in by the centre of the whirlpool, then to be thrown up by the peripheral swirl. I follow the movement of the water, without making any movement myself. That is all I can say about it.'

**J.** Confucius was travelling in the Kingdom of Chu. In a clearing he saw a hunchback who was bringing down flying grasshoppers as easily as if he had taken them by hand. 'You are very skilled,' he said to him; 'tell me your secret.' - 'Here it is,' said the hunchback. 'I practised for five or six months by holding balls balanced on my cane. When I could hold two, I only missed a few grasshoppers. When I could hold three, I only missed one in ten. When I was able to hold five, I took grasshoppers in flight with my cane, as surely as with my hand. Neither my body, nor my arm have nervous tremors any more. My concentration is never distracted by anything. In this immense universe filled with so many beings, I see only the grasshopper at which I aim, so I never miss it.' - Confucius looked at his disciples and said to them: 'Concentration of his will on a single object has produced perfect co-operation between his mind and body.' - Taking his turn to speak, the hunchback said to Confucius: 'But you are a scholar, why have you been questioning me? Why do you wish to know about something that is none of your business? Could it be that you have some evil intention in this?' - - A young man who lived at the seaside was very fond of sea-gulls. Every morning he went to the beach to greet them, and the gulls came down in hundreds to play with him. One day the young man's father said to him: 'Seeing that the gulls are so familiar with you, catch some and bring them to me so that I too may play with them.' ... The next day the young man went to the beach as usual, but with the secret intention of obeying his father. His exterior betrayed his interior. The gulls mistrusted him. They played in the air above his head, but not one of them came down. - The best use that one can make of speech is to keep silent. The best action is not to act. To wish to embrace everything that is knowable, ends with but a superficial knowledge.

**K.** Taking a train of a hundred thousand people with him, Zhao Xiang Zi went hunting in the Zhung Shan Mountains. In order to bring the wild beasts out of their lairs, he set fire to the brushwood. The glow of the fire was visible from a great distance. In the middle of this inferno they saw a man emerge from a rock, fly about in the flames and play in the smoke. All the spectators concluded he was a transcendent being. When the fire had burnt out he came to them as if nothing had happened. Zhao Xiang Zi detained him and examined him at his leisure. He was made just like other men. Zhao Xiang Zi asked him his



secret for penetrating rocks and staying in fire. The man replied: 'What is rock? What is fire?' - Zhao Xiang Zi said: 'What you came out of, is rock; what you passed through, is fire.' - 'Ah,' said the man, 'I knew nothing of that.' - Marquis Wen of Wei heard this story, and asked Zi Xia what he thought about this man. - 'I have heard my master (Confucius) say,' said Zi Xia, 'that he who has reached perfect union with the cosmos can no longer be wounded by any being; he can penetrate metal and stone as he wishes; and he can walk freely on water and through fire.' - 'Do you,' asked the marquis, 'possess this gift?' - 'No,' said Zi Xia, 'because I have not yet succeeded in ridding myself of my will and intelligence; I am still only a disciple.' - 'And your master, Confucius, has he this gift?' asked the marquis. - 'Yes,' said Zi Xia, 'but he does not make a show of it.' - Marquis Wen was enlightened.

L. One of the most transcendent seers, Ji Xian, from the Principality of Qi, established himself in Zheng. He predicted illness and death to the exact day, infallibly. Therefore the people of Zheng, who could not bear to know these things so long in advance, ran away whenever they saw him coming. - Lie Zi went to see him and marvelled at what he saw and heard. When he returned to his master, Hu Zi, he said: 'Until now I held your doctrine to be the most perfect, but now I have found a better one.' - Hu Zi said: 'This is because you do not know all my doctrine. I have only given you the exoteric teaching, and not the esoteric. Your knowledge is like those eggs laid by hens with no cock; it lacks the essential (the germ). Moreover, when one argues, one must have a firm faith on one's opinion. If one should waver, there is a risk of being divined by the adversary. This could be what has happened to you. You could have been deceived, and then taken the natural flair of Ji Xian as transcendent divination. Bring this man to me so that I may see what it is all about.' - The next day Lie Zi brought the seer to Hu Zi, under pretext of a medical consultation. When he came out, the seer said to Lie Zi: 'Alas, your master is a dead man. He will be finished within a few days. On examining him I had a strange vision, as of humid ashes, an omen of death.' - When he had sent the seer away, Lie Zi went in shedding tears and reported the prognosis to Hu Zi. The latter said: 'I manifested myself to him as an inert and sterile earth, with all my energy arrested, (an aspect that common people show only on the approach of death, but which the contemplative can produce at will). He has been taken in by it. Bring him again, and you will see the next stage of the experiment.' - The next day, Lie Zi brought the seer back. When he came out, the seer said to Lie Zi: 'Your master has done well by addressing himself to me; there is already

an improvement; the ashes are becoming re-animated; I have seen signs of vital energy.' - Lie Zi reported these words to Hu Zi, who said: 'This is because I manifested myself to him as an earth fecundated by heaven, with energy rising from the depths under an influence from above. He has seen clearly, but he has interpreted it wrongly, (taking what has resulted from my concentration, as natural). Bring him again, so that we may continue the experiment.' - The next day Lie Zi brought the seer. After his examination, he said: 'Today I have found a vague and indeterminate aspect in your master. I cannot make any prognosis from this, but when his condition becomes more clearly defined, I will be able to tell you what it is.' - Lie Zi reported these words to Hu Zi, who said: 'This is because I manifested myself to him under the form of a great chaos, as yet undifferentiated, all my forces being in a state of neutral equilibrium. He could in fact draw nothing clear from this form. A swell in the water can be caused just as well by a sea monster, a reef, the strength of the current, a spring, a cascade, the meeting of two currents of water, a dam, a deflection, or by the breaching of a dyke; an identical effect produced by nine different causes. (It is therefore impossible to conclude the nature of its cause directly from the swell; further examination is necessary to determine the latter). Bring him once more, and you will see the sequel.' - The next day the seer stopped for only an instant in front of Hu Zi, understood nothing, lost his composure, and fled. - 'Run after him,' said Hu Zi. - Lie Zi obeyed, but could not catch up with him. - 'He will not come back,' said Hu Zi, 'I manifested myself to him as coming from the primordial principle before time, a movement in the void without apparent form, a boiling of inert force. It was too much for him, that's why he has taken to flight.' - Realising that in fact he still understood nothing of his master's esoteric doctrine, Lie Zi remained at home for three whole years. He did the cooking for his wife, and served the pigs as though they were men (in order to destroy any human prejudices within himself). He cut himself off from outside interests and he brought his own artificial culture back to a primitive natural simplicity. He became like a lump of earth, a stranger to all events and happenings, and thus he remained, concentrated on unity, until the end of his days.

**M.** When Master Lie Zi was going to Qi, he suddenly turned and retraced his steps. Bo Hun Wu Ren, whom he had met, asked him: 'Why are you retracing your steps?' - 'Because I was afraid,' said Lie Zi. - 'Afraid of what?' said Bo Hun Wu Ren. - 'I had been in ten restaurants, and five times I was the first to be served. It must be that my interior perfection was visible to those people, for them to have served me before richer and older

clients. I was therefore afraid that, should I go as far as Qi, the prince, having come also to know of my merit, would discharge on to me the government that weighs so heavily on him.' - 'Wisely thought,' said Bo Hun Wu Ren. 'You have escaped a princely patron; but I fear you may yet find masters at home.' - Some time later Bo Hun Wu Ren went to visit Lie Zi. He saw a quantity of shoes (an indication of the presence of so many visitors). Stopping himself at the courtyard, he reflected at length, his chin resting on the end of his stick; then he left without saying a word. However the porter had told Lie Zi. The latter quickly grabbed his sandals and ran after his friend, without even taking the time to put them on. When he caught up with him at the outer gate, he said: 'Why are you leaving like this, without giving me any useful advice?' - 'What's the good of it now?' said Bo Hun Wu Ren. 'Did I not warn you? Now you have masters at home. No doubt you have not attracted them yourself, but you have not kept them away either. What influence will you have on these people now? One can only influence by keeping at a distance. One can no longer speak frankly to those one is involved with. One cannot reprove those to whom one is tied. Common people's subjects of conversation are poison to the perfect man. What is the good of conversing with beings who neither listen nor understand?'

**N.** Yang Zhu was going to Pei and Lao Zi was going to Qin. The two met each other at Liang. On seeing Yang Zhu, Lao Zi raised his eyes to heaven, and said with a sigh: 'I had hoped to be able to instruct you, but I see there is no way.' - Yang Zhu did not reply. When the two travellers reached the hostel where they spent the night, Yang Zhu himself brought all the things required for the toilet. Then, when Lao Zi was settled in his room, Yang Zhu left his shoes by the door and went in on his knees, and said: 'I did not understand what you said about me when you raised your eyes to heaven and sighed. I did not ask you for an explanation then, as I did not wish to delay your journey. But now that you are free, please explain the meaning of your words to me.' - 'You have,' said Lao Zi, 'a haughty look which rebuffs; whereas the Sage appears confused even though he is irreproachable. He considers himself inadequate, whatever his state of perfection.' - 'I will profit from your lesson,' said Yang Zhu, rooted to the spot with shock. - Even that same night Yang Zhu humbled himself so much that the staff of the inn, who had served him with so much respect on his arrival, paid no attention to him on the morning of his departure. (The respect of servants, in China, is proportional to the haughtiness of the traveller).

**O.** When Yang Zhu was passing through the Principality of Song he was received hospitably in a hostel. The host had two wives, one beautiful, the other ugly. The ugly one was liked, the beauty was detested... 'Why so?' asked Yang Zhu of a little servant... .... 'Because,' said the child, 'the beautiful one shows off her beauty, which makes her unpleasant to us; whereas the ugly one knows that she is ugly, which makes us forget her ugliness.' - 'Remember that,' said Yang Zhu to his disciples. 'Being wise, do not pose as having wisdom; that is the secret of being liked everywhere.'

**P.** In this world there are only two ways: that of subordination, or deference; and that of insubordination, or arrogance. These tenets have been defined by the ancients as follows: The arrogant ones have sympathy only for those lesser than themselves, the deferential ones like their superiors also. Arrogance is dangerous, for it makes enemies for oneself; deference is sure, for it only makes friends. Everything succeeds for the deferential person, in both private and public life; whereas the arrogant person has only failures. Thus Yu Zi said that power must be always tempered by condescension; that it is condescension that makes power last; that this rule permits one to prognosticate reliably about the prosperity or ruin of individuals or states. Force is not solid, whereas nothing equals the solidity of softness. - Lao Dan also has said: 'The power of a state brings ruin to it, just as the greatness of a tree calls for the felling axe. Weakness gives life, strength makes death.'

**Q.** The Sage allies himself with those who have the same interior sentiments as himself, the common man links himself with those who please him by their exterior. Now the heart of a beast can be hidden in a human body; a beastly body can contain the heart of a man. In either of these cases, judging by the exterior would lead to error. - Fu Xi, Nü Gua, Shen Nong, the Great Yu, had one a human head on the body of a snake, one a head like a cow's, one the muzzle of a tiger; but under these animal forms, they were great Sages. Whereas Jie the last of the Xias, Zhou the last of the Yins, Duke Huan of Lu, and Duke Mu of Chu, were beasts in human form\*. - When the Yellow Emperor went into battle at Yen Di on the plain of Fan Quan, ferocious beasts formed his front line, and birds of prey formed his infantry. These animals were attached to him through his ascendancy. - When Yao put Kui in charge of music, the animals ran and danced, charmed by the musical strains. - Can one say, therefore, that there is an essential difference between man and the animals? No doubt their forms and tongues are different from those of

\*TH pages 23,24,25,47-59,85,138,149.

men, but couldn't they find a way of understanding each other despite that? The Sages mentioned above, who understood everything and extended their solicitude to all, were able to win over even the animals. There are so many points in common between the instincts of animals and the ways of men. They also live in pairs, and love their offspring. They also seek to house themselves in safe places. They also prefer temperate, to cold, regions. They also come together in groups, walking in step, the little ones in the middle and the big ones outside. They also point out to each other the good places for drinking or feeding. - In the earliest times animals and men lived and travelled together. When men made emperors and kings for themselves, mistrust arose and caused separation. Later on fear brought animals and men further and further apart. However, even now, the distance is not impassable. In the east, in the land of the Jie, the language at least of domestic animals is still understood. The ancient Sages understood the language and penetrated the feelings of all beings, communicating with all as with humans, just as well with the Kui, Shen, Li, and Mei (transcendent beings), as with the birds, quadrupeds, and insects. Starting from the principle that the sentiments of beings which have the same blood and breathe the same air cannot be greatly different, they treated the animals more or less like men, with success. - A monkey keeper of the Principality of Song came to understand monkeys and to communicate with them. He treated them better than the members of his family, refusing them nothing. However, he fell into dire straits. Obligated to ration his monkeys, he thought up the following means of persuasion. 'From now on,' he said to them, 'you will each have three taro roots in the morning, and four in the evening. Will that be all right?' - All the monkeys were furious. - Then he said, 'how about four taros in the morning and three in the evening; will that suit you?' - Satisfied that he had taken notice of their displeasure, the monkeys all settled down quite content. - That is how one wins over the animals. The Sage likewise wins over foolish humans. The means employed matter little, be they real or apparent, provided that they satisfy, and do not cause irritation\*. - *Another example of the direct analogy between animals and man.* - Ji Xing Zi was training a fighting-cock for Emperor Xuan of the Zhou dynasty. After ten days, when asked for news, he said: 'It is not ready to fight; it is still vain and headstrong.' - Ten days later, asked again, he replied: 'Not yet; it still responds to the crowing of other cocks.' - Ten days later, he said: 'Not yet; it is still nervous and passionate.' - After another ten days, he said: 'Now it is ready; it no longer pays attention to the sounds made by other

\*Compare with Zhuang Zi, ch. 2 C, where the same theme is repeated, slightly modified.

members of its species; it is moved by their sight no more than if it were made of wood. No other cock will be able to hold out against it.'

R. Hui Ang, father of Hui Shu, and a sophist like his son, went to visit King Kang of Song. The latter stamped on the floor and coughed with impatience at the sight of him, and said in a loud voice: 'Myself, I value force, bravery; goodness and fairness are subjects that mean nothing to me; now you have been warned; tell me what you have to say.' - 'Right now,' said Hui Ang, 'one of my favourite themes is to explain why the blows of the strong and brave sometimes remain without effect. Would you like to hear a discourse on that?' - 'Most willingly,' said the king. - 'They remain without effect,' replied the sophist, 'when they do not execute them. And why do they not execute them? Because they dare not or they do not wish to. That, again, is one of my favourite themes... Let us take the case where they do not wish to. Why not? Because it will not produce any advantage. This is again one of my favourite subjects... Let us suppose now that there was a way of obtaining all advantages, of winning the hearts of all the men and women in the empire, of protecting oneself from all problems. Would you not like to know of such a way?' - 'But yes,' said the king. - 'Ah well,' said the sophist, 'it is the doctrine of Confucius and Mo Zi, which you did not wish to hear about, just now. Confucius and Mo Zi, these two princes without lands, these nobles without titles, are the pride and joy of all men and women in the empire. If you, a prince with land and titles, were to embrace the doctrine of these two men, everyone would give themselves to you, and you would become more famous than they are, because, unlike them, you have power\*.' - The King of Song could not find a word in reply. - Hui Ang went out in triumph. He was already far away when the King of Song said to his courtiers: 'But say something. That man has reduced me to silence.'

\*Hui Ang was not a disciple of Confucius. However the triumph of the sophists consisted in putting their adversary off his own thesis. The King of Song began by declaring that he detested Confucianism. Hui Ang proves to him, without believing it himself, that it is the best of doctrines.

## Chapter 3. Psychical States\*.

A. At the time of Emperor Mu\*\* of the Zhou dynasty, a magician from the far west came to court. This man was able to pass unharmed through water or fire, pass through metal or stone without encountering any resistance, make torrents run backwards, change the position of town ramparts, levitate himself, take on any form at will whilst keeping his human intelligence, and so on. Emperor Mu venerated him as a spirit, and served him as a disciple would serve his master, giving him the best he had of lodgings, food, and women. Yet the magician found the imperial palace uninhabitable, the imperial cuisine inedible, the women of the harem unworthy of his affection. Then the emperor had a special palace built for him. The materials and workmanship were all exquisite. The expense used up the imperial treasure. The finished edifice reached a height of eight thousand feet. When the emperor dedicated it, he called it the Tower Reaching To Heaven. He filled it with selected young people called in from the Principalities of Zheng and Wei. He installed baths and a harem. He provided it with precious objects, fine silks, cosmetics, perfumes, and curiosities. He had the most famous symphonies performed there. Every month he provided new outfits of superb clothing, every day a profusion of exquisite things... .. None of this had any effect. The magician found nothing to his liking and lived without pleasure in his new lodging, from which he was frequently absent. - The emperor was astonished by his conduct, until one day, during a festival, the magician said to him: 'Come with me.' - The emperor seized the magician's wand which quickly lifted him up into space as far as the palace of transcendent men in the centre of heaven. This palace was made of gold and silver, ornamented with pearls and jade. It was situated above the region of the rain clouds, and seemed to float in space like a cloud. In this supra-terrestrial world, sights, music, perfumes, tastes; nothing was as in the world of men. The emperor understood that he was in the city of the heavenly Sovereign. From up there, his earthly palace looked to him like a little pile of twigs and turf. He would have stayed there for years without even remembering his empire; but the magician invited him to follow him further... This time he took him up beyond the sun and moon, out of sight of land and oceans, into a blinding light, a deafening harmony. Seized with terror and vertigo, the emperor asked to go down. The descent was effected with the rapidity of a meteorite falling through space. - When he came to, the emperor found himself sitting on his seat, surrounded by his courtiers, his cup half full, his stew half

\*Reality, memory, imagination, dream, ecstasy, folly, etc.

\*\*TH p. 121.

eaten. 'What happened to me?' he asked his entourage. - 'It seemed as if you had withdrawn yourself for an instant,' they said. - The emperor thought he had been absent for at least three months. 'How do you explain that?' he asked the magician. - 'Oh, nothing could be more simple,' said the latter. 'I took up your spirit, your body has not moved. Or, rather, I did not even displace your spirit, since all distinctions of time and place are illusive. The mental representation of all possibilities is made without movement and abstracted from time.' - It is from the time of this episode that the distaste of Emperor Mu for the government of his empire and the pleasures of his court began, and also his taste for wandering. It was then that, with his eight famous horses each of a different hue, he undertook his famous expedition beyond the western frontiers. He was accompanied by Zao Fu who drove his chariot, Qi He who served as groom, and Shen Bai who drove the wagon assisted by Ben Rong. After having covered a thousand stages, he reached the Ju Sou tribe, who gave him swan's blood to drink and washed his feet with kourmiss (two fortifiers). The following night was spent on the banks of the Red Torrent. The next day the emperor climbed Mount Kun Lun, visited the Yellow Emperor's ancient palace, and built a cairn in memory of his visit. Next he visited Xi Wang Mu\*, and was entertained by him (or her) near the Green Lake. They exchanged toasts, and the emperor did not hide the fact that it was painful for him to have to go back. After having contemplated the place where the sun rests at the end of its diurnal course of ten thousand stages, he made his way back to the empire. To sum up, he returned disillusioned, having found nothing that resembled his vision. 'Alas,' he said, sighing, 'posterity will say that I sacrificed duty to pleasure.' - And, in fact, having only looked for present happiness, he was not a good emperor and did not attain spiritual perfection, but only lived a long time, dying in his hundredth year.

**B.** Lao Cheng Zi entered the school of Yin Wen (Guan Yin Zi) in order to learn the secret of universal phantasmagoria. For three whole years the latter taught him nothing. Thinking from this coldness that his master judged him of little ability, Lao Cheng Zi excused himself and offered to withdraw. Master Yin Wen bowed to him (a mark of extraordinary esteem), led him to his room, and there, without witnesses (for the divulgence of esoteric knowledge), he said: 'A long time ago, when Lao Dan left for the west\*\*, he summarised his doctrine for me in these words: "The vital spirit and the material body are phantasma-

\*King or fairy? Probably a king, whom legend has made into a woman.

\*\*If authentic, this is the oldest reference to this departure.



goria. The words 'life' and 'death' designate the initial genesis of a being through the action of the generative virtue, and its final transformation under the influence of natural agents. The phantasmagoria is the succession of beginnings and transformations under the influence of the universal motor, until their number is complete. The Principle, first of the beings, is too mysterious, too profound, to be sounded. We can only study corporeal becomings and endings, which are visible and manifest. Understanding that, practically, cosmic evolution consists of the succession of the two states of life and death; this is the key to the comprehension of the phantasmagoria. We are subject to this vicissitude, you and I, and we can observe its effects on ourselves." This instruction received, Lao Cheng Zi returned home, meditated on it for three months, and found the secret of the mystery. He penetrated it so well that he became master of life and death. He was able to modify the seasons, producing thunderstorms in winter, and ice in summer. He was able to change birds into quadrupeds and vice-versa. He taught no one the formula, and no one has since recovered it. Moreover, says Lie Zi, those who seek the ability to transform things should keep it secret, and not make use of it. The ancient rulers did not owe their fame to extraordinary acts of science or courage. We know they preferred to act for the good of humanity, without ostentation.

C. Mental application has eight effects: action, deliberation, success, failure, happiness, sadness, life, and death; all of which belong to the body. Mental abstraction has six causes: will, aversion, intense thought, sleep, delight, and terror; all of which belong to the mind\*. Those who do not know the natural origin of emotion, preoccupy themselves with its cause, when they experience it. Those who know that emotion has a natural origin no longer preoccupy themselves with it, because they know its cause. Everything in the body of a being, fullness and emptiness, gain and loss, is in harmony, in equilibrium, with the state of heaven and earth and the totality of beings which populate the cosmos. A predominance of yin makes one dream of fording a river, with a cool sensation. A predominance of yang makes one dream of passing through fire, with a burning sensation. A simultaneous excess of yin and yang makes one dream of risks and dangers, with fear and hope. In a state of satiety one dreams of giving; in a state of fast one dreams of taking. Superficial minds dream they are rising in the air, serious minds dream they are deep down in the water. Wearing a belt in bed makes one dream of snakes; seeing a plumed bird makes one dream of flying. Before a bereavement one dreams of fire; before an illness one dreams of eating. After drinking a great deal one has sad dreams; after

\*Cf. Rituel des Tcheou, book 24.

dancing too much one cries whilst dreaming. - Lie Zi says: 'A dream is a meeting made by the mind; reality (objective perception) is a contact with the body. Waking thoughts and sleeping dreams are equally impressions. Thus those of truly sound mind think and dream little, and attach little importance to their thoughts and dreams. They know that thoughts and dreams are not the reality they seem to be, but are reflections of the cosmic phantasmagoria. The ancient Sages did not think greatly when awake, did not dream when sleeping, and they spoke neither of their thoughts nor their dreams because they believed as little in the one as the other.' - In the south-eastern corner of the square earth is a land whose frontiers I do not know. It is called Gu Mang. The alternations of yin and yang do not make themselves felt, and there are no seasons; the sun and moon do not shine there, and there is neither day nor night. Its inhabitants do not eat, and do not wear clothes. They sleep almost continuously, awaking once every fifty days. They take as real what they have experienced during their sleep, and as illusion what they experience whilst awake. - In the centre of the earth and of the four seas is the middle kingdom (China), set by the Yellow River, extending from the land of Yue as far as Mount Tai Shan, with an east-west breadth of more than ten thousand stages. The alternations of yin and yang there produce hot and cold seasons; light and darkness alternate producing day and night. Amongst its inhabitants there are wise men and fools. Its natural and industrial products are numerous and varied. It has its princes, officials, rites, and laws. People talk and act there a great deal. They wake and sleep alternately, taking as real what they experience during the waking state, and as vain what they experience during sleep.

- In the north-west corner of the square earth is the land of Fu Lao where the ground, burnt without cease by the sun's rays, does not produce any cereals. The people live on fruit and roots which they eat raw. Brutal, they prize force more than justice. They are almost always moving and seldom rest. They are awake most of the time, and sleep little. They hold as real what they experience during the waking state.

D. A certain Yin, an official of the Zhou dynasty, lived in luxury. His servants got no rest from dawn till night. An old valet, broken and feeble, was no less abused than the others. Now, after having suffered hardship all day, each night this man dreamt he was a prince, seated on a throne, governing a country, and enjoying all the pleasures of it. On awaking he found himself once more a valet, and suffered as such the whole day through. When his friends complained of their lot, the old valet said to them: 'I am not so given to complaining. The life of men is equally divided into day and night. During the day I am a valet and suffer; but

during the night I am a prince and enjoy myself very much. It is good half of the time; why should I complain?' - However the master of this valet, after a day of pleasure, dreamt each night that he was a valet, bowed down with worry, snarled at and rebuked. He told a friend of this. The latter said to him: 'It must be because during the day you have exceeded the lot of pleasure assigned to you by destiny. Destiny compensates for this by your suffering at night.' - The official believed his friend, moderated his luxury, treated his servants better, and found himself the better for it. (Straight away the old valet lost his nocturnal pleasure which destiny had allowed him in compensation for the excess of his daily fatigues).

E. A butcher from Zheng, who was collecting firewood, came across a stray roebuck which he killed and hid under some branches in a hollow, intending to remove it in secret, later. On returning he could not find the place and, believing he had dreamt it, he told the story to others. One of the audience, following his directions, found the roebuck and brought it home. 'This butcher's dream was real,' said the people of his house. 'Real for you,' said his people, 'since it is you who got it.' - However, the next night the butcher had a revelation in a dream that such a person had found his roebuck and hidden it in his house. He went there early in the morning, discovered the roebuck, and accused the person in front of the village chief. The latter said to the butcher: 'If you killed this roebuck whilst awake, why did you tell the story that you did it in a dream? If you killed a roebuck in a dream, it could not be this real roebuck. Therefore, since it cannot be ascertained that you killed the beast, I cannot give judgement in your favour. Moreover, since your adversary found it from directions given in your dream, and you found it again after another dream, you should divide it between the two of you.' - The village chief's judgement was brought to the attention of the Prince of Zheng, who asked his minister what he thought about it. The minister said: 'In order to decide what is a dream, and what is not, and to decide legal rights in a matter of dreams, only the Yellow Emperor and Confucius are qualified. Since we have neither of them to settle this litigation, I think we should stick to the arbitrary judgement of the village chief.'

F. At Yang Li in the Principality of Song a middle-aged man called Hua Zi caught an illness which completely took away his memory. In the evening he no longer knew of an acquisition he had made in the morning, and he could not remember what money he had spent the day before. Outside, he forgot to walk, in the house he did not think of sitting down. All past memories were wiped out as he went along. - A scholar from the Principality

of Lu offered to treat this case of amnesia. Hua Zi's family promised half of his fortune if he should succeed. The scholar said: 'Incantations, prayers, drugs, and acupuncture, will have no effect. He can only be cured if I manage to reshape his mind.'

- The scholar soon observed that the patient still asked for clothes when he was naked, food when hungry, and light when in the dark. He said to the family: 'There is hope of a cure, but my method is secret and I will not divulge it to anyone'.. ... Having said this, he shut himself up with the patient, who, on the seventh day, found himself cured after several years of amnesia. - But what a surprise; as soon as his memory returned, Hua Zi went into a rage, made bloody reproaches to his family, and put the scholar to flight with a lance. They wrested it from him, and asked the reason for his fury. 'Ah,' he said, 'I was so happy when I did not even know if heaven and earth existed. Now, once more, I must register in my memory the successes and failures, pleasures and sufferings, the good and bad things of the past, and I must preoccupy myself with the future. Who can give back to me, even for a moment, the happiness of unconsciousness?' - Zi Gong, who had heard this story and was astonished by it, asked Confucius for an explanation. 'You are incapable of understanding it' (your mind is too practical for that), said Confucius. 'Yen Hui (an abstract contemplative) will understand it better.'

G. A certain Pang of the Principality of Qin had a son. When quite small this child seemed intelligent, but when he grew up his mentality seemed very strange. Singing made him cry, and he thought that white was black, perfumes were stinking, sugar was bitter, and good was bad. In a nutshell, in thoughts and things, in each and everything, he was the opposite of other people.

- A certain Yang said to his father: 'This is quite an extraordinary case, you should go to Lu, where the scholars are very wise, and ask advice.' - The father of the topsyturvy child set off in the direction of Lu. When he was passing through Chen he met Lao Dan and told him about his son. Lao Dan replied: 'Is that why you think he is crazy? All men of these times are thus. They all take evil for good, and make rules of conduct to serve their personal gain. There is no one who does not suffer from it. One fool per family, a family of fools per village, a village of fools per principality, a principality of fools in the empire; that would be tolerable, strictly speaking. But now the whole empire is crazy with the same folly as your son's; if not, it is you who are crazy for thinking differently from the others. Who will ever define the rules of feelings, sounds, colours, smells, tastes, of good and evil? I am not certain if I myself am wise, but I am certain that the scholars of Lu (who claim to define

these things) are the worst sowers of folly. And you are going to ask them to cure your son for you? Believe me, save yourself the expense of a useless journey and return home by the shortest route.'

H. A child born in the Principality of Yen (in the far north) had been taken to the Kingdom of Chu (in the far south of the empire) where he was brought up and spent all his life. As an old man he returned to the land of his birth. Half-way there, as he approached the principal town of Jin, his travelling companions tried to make fun of him by saying: 'Here is the principal town of Yen, your country'... Our man, believing them, became pale and sad. - Then, showing him a mound of the Earth Spirit, they said: 'This is the mound of your native village'... The man sighed sadly. - Then they showed him a house and said: 'Here is the home of your ancestors'... The man burst into tears. - Finally, showing him some tombs, they said: 'And here are their tombs'... With these words our man burst into lamentation. - Then his companions uncovered their hoax. 'We have fooled you,' they said. 'This is Jin, it isn't Yen.' - Our man was very confused, but from then on he controlled his feelings so well that, when he reached Yen and truly saw its principal town, his village mound, the home of his ancestors and their tombs, he showed little or no emotion\*.

\*For the Daoists, sentiment is an error, emotion a fault.

## Chapter 4. Extinction And Union.

**A.** Confucius was meditating in retreat. Zi Gong went in to serve him and found him sad. Not daring to ask him what was the matter, he went out and told Yen Hui (the favourite disciple). The latter took his lute and began to sing. Confucius heard him, called him in, and asked him why he was so happy. - 'And why are you so sad?' asked Yen Hui. 'Tell me first why you are happy,' said Confucius. - Yen Hui said: 'A long time ago you taught me that to please heaven and submit oneself to destiny drives away all sadness. I am doing just that, and that is why I am happy.'

- Confucius looked sombre, took a moment to gather his thoughts together, and said: 'It is true I said that, but you have not fully understood it. Moreover I myself have had to modify the interpretation of it since then... You have taken it in the restricted sense of work and personal improvement, of patience in poverty and all the vicissitudes of life, and of mental repose in all circumstances. Having succeeded in that, you feel happy... I myself have understood it in a wider sense. I had hoped through my books to co-operate with heaven and destiny, in order to amend the Principality of Lu and all the empire, now, and for ages to come. However the princes have not supported me and my doctrines have not been accepted. Having now made no progress with a single principality, what hope have I of succeeding in the future, and for the whole empire? At first the lack of success of my books distressed me, and I thought they were contrary to the views of heaven and the decrees of destiny. But since then I have seen more clearly and realise that I had misunderstood the ancient texts, through having taken them literally. The will of heaven and decrees of destiny are figures of speech, and therefore it is not worth worrying whether one is liked, wanted, deplored, or successful. From now on it matters little to me if my books are a success or a failure.' - Yen Hui bowed to Confucius, and said: 'Master, I think I like you'... Then he went out and told all this to Zi Gong. The latter almost lost his head. He left Confucius, went home, meditated for seven days and nights without food or sleep, and became as thin as a skeleton. However Yen Hui went to speak with him and restored his faith in the ancient texts, but without succeeding in taking him as far as Daoist indifference. Zi Gong went back to Confucius and till the end of his days he recited endlessly the Annals and the Odes without believing them.

**B.** An official from Chen who was on a mission to the Principality of Lu, met a certain Shu Sun who said: 'We have a Sage here in Lu.' - 'You don't mean Kong Qiu?' (Confucius), said the official. - 'Yes,' said Shu Sun. - 'How do you know he is truly a Sage?'

asked the official. - 'Because,' said Shu Sun, 'I have heard his disciple Yen Hui say that Kong Qiu thinks with his body.' - 'Then,' said the official, 'we also have a Sage, Geng Sang Zi, a disciple of Lao Dan, who sees with his ears and hears with his eyes.'

- This remark of the official from Chen reached the ears of the Prince of Lu, who, most intrigued, sent a high-ranking minister bearing rich presents to invite Geng Sang Zi to his court. Geng Sang Zi accepted the invitation, and was received by the prince with great respect. Straight away Geng Sang Zi said to him: 'You have been misinformed about my seeing with my ears and hearing with my eyes; one organ cannot be used as another.'

- 'That does not matter,' said the prince, 'I wish to know your doctrine.' 'It is this,' said Geng Sang Zi; 'my body is intimately united with my mind; my mind and body are intimately united with the force and matter of the cosmos, which are intimately united with the primordial formlessness, the indefinite infinite being, the Principle. In consequence of this intimate union, every consonance and dissonance which occurs in the universal harmony, be it close or at a great distance, is perceived by me, but in such a way that I cannot say through which organ I perceive it. I know without knowing how I come to know\*.' - This explanation pleased the Prince of Lu who passed it on to Confucius the next day. The latter smiled and said nothing\*\*.

C. The prime minister of Song met Confucius and asked him if he were a Sage. - 'If I were,' replied Confucius, 'I should not say yes. Therefore I can only say that I have studied and learnt a great deal.' - 'And were the first three emperors Sages?' asked the minister. - 'They governed well and were prudent and brave, but I don't know if they were Sages,' replied Confucius. - 'And the five emperors after them?' asked the minister... 'They also governed well,' said Confucius, 'they were good and just, but I don't know if they were Sages.' - 'And the three emperors who followed them?' asked the minister... 'They also governed well according to the times and circumstances, but I don't know if they were Sages.' - 'But then,' said the astonished minister, 'who do you consider to be wise?' - Confucius looked very serious, thought for a moment, and then said: 'Amongst the men of the west\*\*\*, it is said there are those who can maintain peace without governing, inspire confidence without speaking, make everything

\*Perfect Daoist knowledge; the consonance of two instruments tuned to the same note; the cosmos and the individual, perceived through intimate, total, sense.

\*\*Smile of approval. Having himself become a Daoist, he had nothing to say, says the commentary.

\*\*\*Fiction, says the commentary. Confucius taught the minister a lesson by inventing imaginary Sages who were quite the opposite of himself. There is no historic or geographic significance in this text.

work without interfering, so imperceptibly, so impersonally, that the people do not even know their names. I think these latter are Sages, if what is said of them is true.' - The minister of Song asked no further. After having given it some thought, he said: 'Kong Qiu has taught me a lesson.'

D. Zi Xia asked Confucius if he thought Yen Hui was as good as himself... 'In goodness,' said Confucius, 'he surpasses me.' - 'And Zi Gong?' asked Zi Xia... 'In discernment,' said Confucius, 'Zi Gong surpasses me.' - 'And Zi Lu?' asked Zi Xia... 'In bravery,' said Confucius, 'Zi Lu surpasses me.' - 'And Zi Zhang?' asked Zi Xia... 'In tenacity,' said Confucius, 'Zi Zhang surpasses me.' - Quite astonished, Zi Xia stood up and said: 'But why, then, do these four men stay in your school?' - 'Because,' said Confucius, 'Yen Hui, so good, does not know how to stand up to things; Zi Gong, so clear-sighted, does not know when to yield; Zi Lu, so brave, lacks prudence; Zi Zhang, so worthy, has no tact. If each one of them surpasses me in some quality, they are all inferior to me through some fault. That is why they stay in my school, and why I accept them as disciples.'

E. Having become a master in his turn, Lie Zi, the disciple of Master Lin of Hu Qiu, the friend of Bo Hun Wu Ren, lived in the southern suburb (where the famous Daoist whom we know only as Nan Guo Zi, or Master of the Southern Suburb, also lived). Every day Lie Zi discoursed with whomever presented themselves, without even bothering to find out with whom he was dealing. But he never visited Nan Guo Zi, who had been his neighbour for twenty-five years, and often passed him in the street without paying any attention to him. His disciples concluded from this that the two masters were enemies. A newly arrived disciple from Chu naively asked Lie Zi why. 'There is no enmity between Nan Guo Zi and me,' said Lie Zi, 'he hides his perfection in the void under a corporeal appearance. He no longer listens with his ears, looks with his eyes, speaks with his mouth, or thinks with his mind. He is no longer capable of any interest; it is therefore useless to try to have any relationship with him. If you wish, we can go and see.' - Followed by about forty disciples, Lie Zi went to the home of Nan Guo Zi. The latter was, in fact, so lost in abstraction that it was impossible to make any conversation with him. He looked vaguely at Lie Zi without saying a single word to him; then, looking towards the last of the disciples, he said: 'I congratulate you for seeking the truth with courage'... .. And that was all. - The disciples went back quite astonished. Lie Zi said to them: 'Why are you astonished? He who has found what he was seeking, no longer speaks of it. Nan Guo Zi's silence is more meaningful than any word. His apathetic look hides his



perfection. This man no longer thinks or speaks because he knows. Why does this astonish you?'

F. When Lie Zi became a disciple he spent his first three years trying to rid himself of making judgements and qualifying in words. At the end of that time his master Lao Shang honoured him for the first time by looking at him. After five years he neither judged nor qualified even mentally; then Lao Shang smiled at him for the first time. After seven years, when he had forgotten the distinction of yes and no, of advantage and disadvantage, his master made him sit on his mat for the first time. At the end of nine years, when he had lost all notion of right and wrong, of good and evil, and of himself and others; when he had become absolutely indifferent to all, then he found perfect communion between the exterior world and his own interior. He ceased to make use of his senses (but knew all through superior, universal, and abstract, science). His spirit solidified as his body dissolved; his flesh and bones liquefied (etherised); he lost all sensation of the seat on which he was sitting, of the ground on which his feet were pressing; he lost all knowledge of fixed ideas, of spoken words; he reached that state where the mind is no longer moved by anything.

G. When he was a young disciple, Lie Zi liked going for walks. His master Hu Zi asked him what he liked about walking... Lie Zi said: 'In general it is a relaxation; many do it for the pleasure of looking around; I myself find pleasure in it by meditating; there are walkers and walkers; I myself differ from the common.'

- 'Not so much as you think,' said Hu Zi; 'for you, like the others, enjoy yourself. They enjoy themselves visually, you enjoy yourself mentally. There is a great difference between exterior meditation and interior contemplation. The meditator takes his pleasure from beings, the contemplative takes it from within himself. The perfect walker takes from within himself; the imperfect walker takes from beings.' - After this instruction Lie Zi thought it best to completely give up going for walks. 'That is not what I meant,' said Hu Zi; 'go for your walks, but go perfectly. The perfect walker goes without knowing where he is going, and looks without taking account of what he has seen. To go everywhere and look at everything with this mental attitude (of total abstraction, a complete view with nothing in detail); that is perfect walking and contemplation. I did not advise you to stop going for walks, but to walk in perfection.'

H. Long Shu said to Doctor Wen Zhi: 'You are good at diagnosis. I am ill. Can you cure me?' - 'I can, if it should please destiny,' said Wen Zhi. 'Tell me what you are suffering from.' - 'I am

suffering,' said Long Shu, 'from a strange illness. Praise leaves me cold, blame does not affect me; a gain does not make me happy, a loss does not sadden me; I am equally indifferent to life and death, wealth and poverty. I attach no more importance to men than to pigs, and to myself than to others. I feel as much a stranger in my own home as in a hostelry, and in my place of birth as in a foreign land. No distinction attracts me, no punishment frightens me; fortune and misfortune, advantage or disadvantage, happiness or sadness, are all the same to me. This being so, I cannot bring myself to serve my prince, associate with my parents and friends, live with my wife and children, or attend to my servants. What is this illness? What remedy can cure it?' - Wen Zhi told Long Shu to strip to the waist. Then, having placed him such that the sun shone directly on his naked back, he placed himself in front of his chest in order to examine his viscera by transparency. 'Ah,' he said suddenly, 'I can see your heart like a little empty object, as long and wide as a thumb. Six orifices are already opened, the seventh is about to open. You are suffering from the wisdom of the wise. What can my poor remedies do for such an illness\*?'

I. Having no cause and living forever, is a way (that of the Principle alone)\*\*. Born of a living being, and having great longevity, is a permanence (that of the genies). After living, ceasing to be would be a great misfortune. - Having had a cause, to be dead always, would be another way. Being dead of a dead being, quickly ceasing to be, would be the other permanence (of nothingness). After death, to live again, is good fortune. - Not to act, and to live, is a way. To live thereby a long time, is a permanence. - To act and to die, is the other way. To cease thereby to be, is the other permanence. - Ji Liang was dead, so Yang Zhu went to his house and sang (because Ji Liang had lived happily until the end of his days). When Sui Wu was dead, Yang Zhu caressed his body whilst shedding tears (as if to console him because he had died prematurely after a hard life). He acted badly in both cases, since everything changes after death. The common people sing and cry over lives and deaths, without knowing why; wrongly or at crossed purposes. - In order to live for a long time, one must do nothing, push nothing to the extreme. It is a fact of experience that, just before death the eyesight becomes used up by becoming more piercing for a time. Hearing the flight of little flies is a sign of approaching deafness (for the same

\*Long Shu is an almost perfect, indifferent, Daoist. He only needs to rid himself of the illusion that his wisdom is an illness, and the wish to be cured of it.

\*\*Parts of this paragraph are inept, inserted solely for the sake of parallelism. The general meaning is that there are two states of life and death; that inaction prolongs life, and action is suicide.

reason). The same applies to taste, and the sense of smell. Excessive agitation precedes, and brings on, paralysis. Excessive insight precedes, and ushers in, madness. Every excess brings ruin.

**J.** In the Principality of Zheng, at Bu Ze there were many thinkers (theoreticians), at Dong Li there were many talented men (practitioners). A certain Bai Feng Zi from Bu Ze (a theoretician) was passing through Dong Li with his disciples, when he met Deng Xi (a practitioner) with his disciples. The latter said to his disciples: 'Should we make fun of these others?'... 'Let's,' said the disciples. - Addressing himself to Bai Feng Zi, Deng Xi said: 'Speaking of animal rearing, pigs and dogs are reared in order to make use of them. For what use do you rear your disciples?' - One of the disciples who accompanied Bai Feng Zi replied directly as follows: 'In the lands of Qi and Lu men of talent from your school abound. There are artisans who work with clay, wood, metal, and leather; musicians, writers, and mathematicians; tactical experts, and masters of ceremony; all these and more. They are only lacking in thinkers for the direction of these talented people. It is to that end that we are destined. Without theoreticians the practitioners serve no purpose.' - Deng Xi found nothing with which to reply. With his eyes he signalled to his disciples to say nothing, and he retired crestfallen.

**K.** Gong Yi was famous for his strength. Tang Xi, a great lord, praised him in front of Emperor Xuan of the Zhou dynasty. The emperor sent Gong Yi an invitation to court, which he had to obey. Now he had a fairly puny look which astonished the emperor, who said to him: 'They have praised you for your strength; what can you do?' - Gong Yi said: 'I can break the leg of a grasshopper and tear off the wing of a cycada.' - The emperor was not amused. 'I call a man strong,' he said, 'if he can tear up a buffalo hide or hold back nine bulls by their tails. If you can only do what you have just said, why do they extol your strength?' - 'That's a good question,' said Gong Yi, sighing and drawing himself back modestly; 'I will answer it quite frankly. I was a disciple of Shang Qiu Zi (a Daoist), whose strength was unequalled, but who never showed it off so that even his family did not know of it. I looked after him when he was dying, and he left me this instruction: "Those who seek fame only find it through extraordinary actions. By doing only ordinary things, one does not even become famous in one's family. This is moreover the way that I judge best, and I advise you to imitate it"... Now if a great lord has extolled my strength before your majesty it is because I have not kept to the supreme recommendation of my dying master, and have let someone catch a glimpse of something. The fact that I have revealed myself, shows that I have no strength. For he who knows

how to hide his strength is stronger than he who exercises it.'

L. Prince Mou of Zhong Shan was the strong man of Wei. He liked conversing with able people, concerned himself little with the administration, and had an open affection for Gong Sun Long, the sophist from Zhao. This weakness made Zi Yu, the music master, laugh. Mou asked him why he laughed at his affection for Gong Sun Long... Zi Yu said: 'That man recognises no master, is no one's friend, rejects all principles, attacks all existing schools, only likes peculiar ideas, and concerns himself only with strange discourses. Everything he proposes is intended only to muddle people and lead them astray. This is more or less what Han Tan (an unknown sophist) and his consorts did in the old days.' - Upset, Prince Mou asked him if he had not exaggerated, not told the truth. - Zi Yu replied: 'Judge for yourself. This is what Gong Sun Long said to Kong Chuan. "A good archer," he said, "must be able to shoot arrow after arrow so quickly and accurately that the point of each arrow enters the end of the preceding one, the arrows forming a solid line from the bowstring to the target"... Seeing that Kong Chuan was astonished, Gong Sun Long continued by saying that Hong Chao, the pupil of Peng Meng, had done even better. Wishing to frighten his wife who had been angry with him, he drew his best bow and let fly his best arrow so accurately that it razed her pupils without making her blink, and it fell to earth without raising any dust. Are these the propositions of a reasonable man?' - Prince Mou replied that sometimes the propositions of Sages are not understood by fools, and that what had been quoted could be explained reasonably. - 'You have been a pupil of Gong Sun Long,' said Zi Yu; 'that is why you think you should show him in a good light. I have no reason to do so, and shall continue to blacken his character. Here are some examples of the paradoxes he came out with in the presence of the King of Wei: "One can think without purpose; one can touch without reaching; that which is, cannot end; a shadow cannot be moved; a hair can support thirty thousand books; a horse is not a horse; an orphan calf can have a mother;" and other twaddle.' - Prince Mou said: 'Perhaps it is you who do not understand these profound words\*. Thinking without purpose can refer to concentration of the spirit, united with the Principle; touching without reaching refers to universal, pre-existing, contact; that which is, cannot end, a shadow cannot move, serves to introduce a discussion of the ideas of change and movement; that a hair can support thirty thousand books, serves to introduce the question of content and weight; that a white horse is not a horse, calls for discussion of identity or difference of substance and accidents; an orphaned calf can have a mother, if it is not an orphan, etc.'

\*Cf. Zhuang Zi ch. 33 G.

- 'You have learnt,' said Zi Yu, 'to play the single note of Gong Sun Long. You need others to teach you to use the other holes of your intellectual flute.' This impertinence rendered the prince speechless at first. When he had pulled himself together, he sent Zi Yu away with instructions not to appear before him again, unless invited.

**M.** After reigning for fifty years, Yao wanted to know if his government had given good results and if the people were happy with it. He therefore questioned his usual counsellors, both from the capital and beyond, but none of them gave him a clear reply. Yao then disguised himself and went around the streets, where he heard a boy singing the following refrain: 'Amongst all the people there are no longer any bad ones, everything is better. Without having to be told, without having been obliged to, they all conform to the laws of the emperor.' - Full of joy, Yao asked the boy from whom he had learnt this refrain. - 'The master,' he said. - Yao asked the master, who had composed this refrain... .. 'It comes from the ancients,' said the master. - (Pleased that his reign had kept the ancient status quo, that his government had been so little active that the people had not even been aware of it), Yao decided to abdicate and to cede his throne to Shun (out of fear of spoiling his glory before his death).

**N.** Guan Yin Xi (Guan Yin Zi) said: 'All beings are clearly revealed to him who dwells in nothingness (of interior form, in an indeterminate state). He is sensitive to their impression like a calm lake; he reflects them as in a mirror; he repeats them like an echo. United with the Principle, he is in harmony with all beings; he knows all through general, superior reasoning, and in consequence he no longer uses his senses to know individual things and details. The true reason for things is invisible, ungraspable, indefinable, and indeterminable. The spirit alone, returned to the state of perfect natural simplicity, can see partially into it when in deep contemplation. After this revelation, one no longer wishes for, or to do, anything, which is true science and true talent. He who has seen the nothingness of all desire and all actions; what can he wish for; what can he wish to do? Even if he were to limit himself to picking up a lump of earth, or dealing with a handful of dust, he would still have been unfaithful to the principles, for he would have acted.'

## Chapter 5. The Cosmic Continuum.

**A.** Emperor Tang of the Yin dynasty asked Xia Ji if, right at the very beginning, beings existed. - Xia Ji said: 'If they had not existed, how could there be any now? If we were to doubt their existence in the ancient past, future men could doubt if there were any now (our present becoming one day, their past), which would be absurd.' - 'Then,' said Tang, 'is there division, or continuity, in time? What is it that determines before and after?' - Xia Ji said: 'One speaks, since the origin, of the beginnings and endings of beings. In truth, are there really beginnings and endings, or successive continuous transitions; who knows? Being exterior to other beings, and anterior to my own future states, how can I know (if endings, deaths, are cessations or transformations)?' - 'In any case,' said Tang, 'time is infinite according to you. What do you think of space? Is it equally infinite?' - 'I know nothing about it,' said Xia Ji. - But Tang insisted, and Xia Ji said: 'The void is infinite, for one cannot add a void to a void; but as one can add beings to existing beings, I don't know whether the cosmos is finite or infinite.' - Tang continued by asking if there were anything beyond the four seas (beyond known terrestrial space). - Xia Ji replied: 'I have been to the east as far as Ying, and asked what lies beyond. They replied that it is the same beyond... I concluded from this experience that the terms four seas, four regions, four poles, are perhaps not absolute. For, in the end, by continually adding, one reaches an infinite value. If our (heaven-earth) cosmos were finite, would it not be continued without end by other adjacent (heaven-earth) cosmoses? Who knows if our world (heaven-earth) is more than a unit in infinity? - In the old days Nü Gua closed up the crack which existed on the horizon between the circumference of the heavenly canopy and the terrestrial plateau (thus delimiting this world) with stones of five colours. He immobilized the turtle (which supports the earth) by cutting off its four feet, thereby fixing the position of the four poles (the cardinal points). Thus everything in this world was put in stable equilibrium. But later on, in his struggle against Emperor Zhuan Xu, Gong Gong broke the (north-western) heavenly pillar on Mount Bu Zhou, and ruptured the attachment of the earth (with the south-east firmament). It followed that the sky inclined towards the north-west, and the earth sloped towards the south-east. Since then, the sun, moon, and constellations all glide towards the west (where they set); all the rivers of China flow towards the east.'

**B.** Tang asked again if beings were naturally big or small, long or short, similar or different... But continuing to develop his

theme, Xia Ji said: 'A long way off in the east (south-east) of the China Sea (at the place where the sky has separated from the earth), is an immense bottomless abyss, called the universal confluence, where all the waters of the earth, and those of the Milky Way (the collecting river of the celestial streams), flow without its content ever increasing or diminishing. Between this gulf and China there are (there were) five great islands, Dai Yu, Yüan Jiao, Fang Hu, Ying Zhou, and Peng Lai\*. - At their base each of these islands measures thirty thousand stages in circumference. Their flat tops each have a circumference of nine thousand stages. They are situated seventy thousand stages from each other. The buildings that cover these islands are all of gold and jade; the animals are familiar kinds; the vegetation is marvellous; the flowers are scented; the fruits, when eaten, ward off old age and death. The inhabitants of these islands are all genies, sages. Every day they visit one another by flying through the air. - Originally the islands were not fixed, but floated on the sea, going up and down with the tide, wobbling under the feet. The genies and sages grew tired of this instability, and they complained to the Sovereign. Fearing that they would run aground one day on the western lands, the Sovereign ordered the Genie of the North Sea to remedy this danger. The latter charged some gigantic turtles to support the five islands on their backs, three of them supporting each island. They are subject to replacement every sixty thousand years. Then the islands no longer wobbled. But one day, one of the giants from the land of Long Bai (in the north) came through the air to this region, and threw in his line. He caught six of the fifteen turtles, put them on his back, and returned home to prepare their carapaces for divination. Straight away the two islands of Dai Yu and Yüan Jiao (which had been held up by these six turtles) sank into the ocean, (thereby reducing the legendary Islands of the Genies to three). The Sovereign was most annoyed by this event. He reduced the extent of the land of Long Bai, and the gigantic stature of its inhabitants. However at the time of Fu Xi and of Shen Nong, the latter still had a height of several dozen height standards. - At four hundred thousand stages to the east of China, in the land of Jiao Yao, the men are one foot five inches tall. - At the north-east corner of the earth, the Zheng Ren are only nine inches tall. - These are standard measurements.'

C. 'Let us speak now of duration. The Ming Ling tree which grows to the south of China has a leafy period (spring and summer) of five centuries, and a bare period (autumn and winter) also of five centuries (the cycle therefore lasting a thousand years).

\*Probably the oldest text on the Isles of the Genies.

The great Chun tree of antiquity had a cycle of sixteen thousand years. A toadstool grows on manure heaps which opens in the morning and is dead by evening. In summer, mayflies are born during the rain, and die when the sun comes out. In the far north, in the black waters of the Heavenly Lake, there is a fish as wide as several thousand stages, and long in proportion, which is called the Kun; and a bird called Peng whose extended wings obscure the sky like clouds, its other dimensions being proportional. These beings are known to us through the Great Yu, who saw them; through Bo Yi who named them; and through Yi Jian who classified them... The Jiao Ming, born by the waterside, are so small that they can perch on the antenna of a mosquito, without the latter being aware of it; they are invisible even to the eyes of Li Zhu and Shi Kuang. But after the Yellow Emperor had fasted three months on Mount Kong Tong in company with Rong Cheng Zi, when his mind was as if extinguished and his body as if dead, he saw them with his transcendent sight as clearly as Mount Song, and heard them with his transcendent hearing as clearly as a thunderclap. - In the lands of Wu and Chu (in the south) the great Yu Bi tree grows. In winter it produces red fruits with an acid taste. Transplanted to the north of Huai, it changes into a spiny and sterile bush (*Citrus spinosa*). The thrush does not go beyond the River Ji, the badger cannot live south of the Wen. The nature of places seems to be the same, some accommodate themselves to a place, whereas others do not, without one being able to discover why. If we cannot account for these concrete things, how do you expect me to tell you about abstract things, such as great and small, long and short, similarities and differences?' (A return to the question posed in B).

D. The massif of Mounts Tai Xing and Wang Wu covered seven hundred square stages, and had a height of eighty thousand feet\*. A ninety year old from Bei Shan wished to establish a communications link there, between the south and the north. He brought together the people of his household and said to them: 'Let us set ourselves this task; let us flatten this height and put the north in communication with the Han Valley'... 'To work,' they cried in chorus... But the old wife of the nonagenarian objected, saying: 'Where are you going to put the earth and stones of these mountains?'... 'We will throw them into the sea,' they said in chorus... So the work began. Under the direction of the old man, those of his sons and grandsons capable of carrying something, attacked the rocks, dug up the earth, and carried the debris basket by basket as far as the sea. Their enthusiasm spread to

\*To the Chinese, this represents the distance to be walked to reach the summit.



the whole neighbourhood. Even the son of an official's widow, a boy just growing his second teeth, ran with the workers when it was neither too hot nor too cold. - However a man from He Qiu, who believed himself wise, tried to stop the nonagenarian by saying to him: 'What you are doing is unreasonable. With the strength you have left, you will never get to the bottom of these mountains'... The nonagenarian said: 'You are the more unreasonable one, whereas the widow's son is less so. I shall soon die, that is true; but my sons will continue, then my grandsons, and their sons, and so on. They will multiply without end, whereas nothing will ever be added to the finite mass of this mountain. Therefore they will finish by flattening it.' - The constancy of this nonagenarian terrified the Genie of the Serpents, who supplicated the Sovereign to prevent his proteges from being dispossessed by this obstinate old man. The latter ordered Kua Er's two giant sons to separate the two mountains Tai Xing and Wang Wu. That is how the trough between the northern plains and the Han basin was produced. (Moral, count on the effect of time).

E. A long time ago, the father of the two giants mentioned above wished to race the sun. He ran as far as the Yu Valley, where, being thirsty, he drank the river, and then swallowed the Wei. But that was not enough, so he ran towards the Great Lake, which he failed to reach, as he died of thirst on the way. His corpse and club became the Deng Forest which extends for several thousand stages.

F. The Great Yu said: 'In the six regions, between the four seas, lit by the sun and moon, ruled by the course of the stars, ordered by the succession of the seasons, dominated by the duodenary cycle of Jupiter, beings live in an order that the Sage can penetrate.' - Xia Ji said: 'Other beings live in other conditions for which the Sage has not the key. For example, when the Great Yu canalized the waterways to drain the land, he wandered around the North Sea to a far-off northern land without wind, rain, animals, or plants of any kind, on a high plateau surrounded by steep cliffs, and with a conical mountain in its centre. From a bottomless hole at the summit of this cone, gushed water with an odour of spice and a taste of wine, which flowed in four streams to the base of the mountain, and watered all the land. The region is very healthy, and its inhabitants are gentle and simple. They live in common, without distinction of age nor sex, without chiefs, and without families. They do not cultivate the land, nor do they wear clothes. Very numerous, they know neither the joys of youth nor the sadness of old age. They are fond of music and sing together all day long. They satisfy their hunger by drinking the water of the marvellous spring, and recover their strength

by bathing in the same waters. They all live in this way for exactly one hundred years, and die without ever having been ill.' In the old days, in his wanderings towards the north, Emperor Mu of the Zhou dynasty visited this land, and stayed there for three years. When he returned, the memory of it made him find his empire, his palace, his women, and so on, insipid. After a few months he gave up everything in order to go back there. Guan Zhong, who was the prime minister for Duke Huan of Qi, almost decided to conquer this land. But Xi Peng advised the duke against it saying it would be folly to risk the lives of his soldiers and the loss of his feudal dependents, who might be tempted to desert, all because of the whim of an old man, whilst Qi was so vast, populous, civilized, beautiful, and rich. Duke Huan gave up the enterprise, and told Guan Zhong what Xi Peng had said. Guan Zhong said: 'I do not esteem Xi Peng very highly. He is so taken up by Qi that he sees nothing beyond it.' - The men of the south cut their hair (very) short and go naked, those of the north wrap their body in furs, the Chinese have their own hair-style and wear clothes. In each land, according to particular circumstances and natural conditions, the inhabitants believe they have the best of culture, commerce, fishing, clothing, means of communication, etc. - Without doubt there are unreasonable or barbaric practices amongst certain peoples, but these are artificial; one should seek to reform them, but without offending them. - Thus to the east of Yue, the Che Mu devour their first-born, for the good, they say, of the children who will follow. When their grandfather is dead, they chase away the grandmother, because, being the wife of a dead person, they say she will attract evil influences. - To the south of Chu, the Yen Ren scrape the flesh from their dead, and throw it away, and then they piously bury them. If any of them were not to do this, he would not be reputed a pious son. - To the west of Qin, in the land of Wen Kang, the Yi Chu burn their dead parents, in order that they may ascend to heaven with the smoke. If any one of them were not to act in this way, he would be held as impious.

**G.** Let us be reserved in our judgements, for even the Sage is ignorant of many things, even things which can be seen every day... Confucius, who was travelling in the east, saw two boys who were arguing, and asked them the reason for it. The first said: 'I claim that when the sun rises it is closer, and that at midday it is further.' The second said: 'I claim that at its rising the sun is further away, and that at midday it is closer.' The first boy continued: 'At its rising the sun appears big; at midday it seems small; therefore it is closer in the morning and further at midday, for distance makes objects seem smaller.' The second said: 'At its rising the sun is cool; at midday it is raging hot;

therefore it is further away in the morning than at midday, for distance from a fire diminishes the heat.' Confucius found nothing to say to decide this question, to which he had never given any thought. The two boys laughed at him and said: 'Why do they say you are wise?'

**H.** The continuum (continuity) is the greatest law in the world. It is different to cohesion or contact. Take a hair and hang a weight on it; it breaks. It is the hair which is broken, not the continuity. The continuous cannot be broken. Some do not believe this. I am going to show them, by the following examples, that the continuous is independent of contact. - Zhan He was fishing with a line made from a single filament of natural silk\*, using a bent needle as a hook, half a grain of wheat as bait, and a fishing-rod. With this rudimentary apparatus he pulled enormous fish from a deep pool, without his line breaking, his hook becoming straightened out, or his rod bending. The King of Chu learnt of this, and asked him to explain how he did it. Zhan He said to him: 'In the old days the famous archer Pu Ju Zi reached the grey cranes in the clouds with his arrows, using a very weak bow and a simple thread. He could do this because his mental application established continuity between his hand and the object. I practised for five years to get the same result, using rod and line. When I throw my hook in, my mind, which is completely empty of other thoughts, goes straight to the fish, through my hand and the tackle, establishing continuity; and the fish is taken without defiance or resistance. And if you were to apply the same procedure to the government of your kingdom, the result would be the same'... 'Thank you,' said the King of Chu... *Therefore the will makes the continuity between the mind and its object.*

**I.** *The heart makes the continuity between a man and his family.* Gong Hu of Lu, and Qi Ying of Zhao were both ill, so they asked Pian Qiao, the famous doctor, to cure them. He did so, and then he said: 'That was only a passing crisis, a constitutional predisposition remains, and there is sure to be a recurrence; other things than medicine are needed to avoid that.' - 'What do we need?' asked the two men... 'You,' said Pian Qiao to Gong Hu, 'have a strong heart and a weak body, and in consequence you wear yourself out in impracticable projects. You, Qi Ying, have a weak heart and a strong body, and in consequence you wear yourself by ill-considered efforts. If I were to swop over your two hearts, you would find yourselves in good shape.' - 'Do it,' said the two men. - Pian Qiao gave them wine containing a drug which made them unconscious for three days, opened up their

\*Such as the silkworm produces. Several filaments must be spun together to make a silk thread.

chests, took out and changed over the two hearts, and closed up the incisions with his famous salve. On awaking the two men found themselves perfectly healthy. - But it happened that when they left, Gong Hu went straight to the home of Qi Ying, and installed himself with his wife and children, who did not know him. Qi Ying likewise went straight to the home of Gong Hu, and installed himself with his wife and children, who also did not recognize him. The two families almost came to litigation, but when Pian Qiao explained the mystery to them, they continued to live peacefully.

**J. *Music makes continuity between man and the whole of nature.***  
 When Pao Ba touched his cither, birds danced and fish jumped. Shi Wen (who later became the chief musician of Zheng), wished to acquire the same talent, and left his family in order to become attached to Shi Xiang. First he spent three whole years exercising his fingering and touch, without playing a single note. Judging him to have little ability, Shi Xiang ended by telling him he could go back home... Putting down his cither, Shi Wen said with a sigh: 'No, I am not without ability; but I have an aim, an ideal higher than ordinary classical playing; I am still unable to communicate to others, the influence coming from my heart; that is why I dare not make my cither resonate; it wouldn't yet make the sounds I want. If I must leave, I shall do so; but it will only be for a time; we will see each other soon.' - In fact, not long after, Shi Wen came back to Shi Xiang. 'How goes your playing?' asked the latter. 'I have found my ideal,' said Shi Wen; 'you are going to see'... It was then springtime. Shi Wen played the chord Shang, which responds to the pipe Nan and the season of autumn; straight away a cool wind blew and the fruits ripened. When, in autumn, he played the chord Jiao, which responds to the bell Jia and to the season of spring, a warm wind blew, and the plants flowered. When, in summer, he played the chord You, which responds to the bell Huang and the season of winter, snow began to fall and the watercourses froze. When, in winter, he played the chord Zheng, which responds to the pipe Rui Pin and the season of summer, flashes of light shone and the ice melted. Finally, when he played the four chords simultaneously, a gentle breeze blew, graceful clouds floated in the air, a sweet dew fell, and winey springs gushed from the earth... Beating his chest and bowing (showing signs of regret), Shi Xiang said: 'How well you play. It equals or surpasses in strength that of Shi Kuang and of Zi Yen. In your presence these masters should put down their cithers, and pick up the flageolet, in order to accompany you.'

**K. Another example of mysterious correspondence through music.** When Xue Tan was learning to sing under Qin Qing, he became discouraged and told his master he was going away. Qin Qing did not tell him to stay, but, at the customary light meal for the moment of departure, he sang so moving a lament to him, that Xue Tan changed his mind, asked to be forgiven for his fickleness, and asked if he might stay. - Then Qin Qing told his friend the following story: 'In the old days, Er Han, who was going to Qi, had no more provisions and sang for food at an inn at Yong Men. Afterwards the beams of the rafters of the inn continued the song for three whole days, so well that people ran there, refusing to believe the landlord that Er Han had left... When this Er Han sang a lament at a stop on the circuit, young and old were so affected that they took no food for three days. When, at a stop on the circuit, Er Han sang a gay refrain, young and old forgot their sadness, danced for joy, and gave generously. Even in our days the people of Yong Men express their feelings in a particularly gracious way. It was Er Han who taught them that.'

**L. Another example of mystic continuity.** When Bo Ya touched his cither, Zhong Zi Qi perceived what he intended to play. Therefore, as soon as Bo Ya tried to express through his chords the idea of a high mountain, Zhong Zi Qi would say: 'Well, well, it's coming up like Mount Tai'... Another time, when Bo Ya was trying to express flowing waters, Zhong Zi Qi said: 'It's flowing like the Jiang or the River'... Whatever idea Bo Ya formed within himself, Zhong Zi Qi perceived it from the sound of his cither. One day when the two friends were passing by the north of Mount Tai, they were surprised by a shower and took refuge under a rock. To charm away the boredom of waiting, Bo Ya played his cither, first trying to render the effect of rain, then the fall of a rock. Zhong Zi Qi quickly foresaw these successive intentions... .. Then Bo Ya put down his cither, and said with a sigh: 'Your hearing is marvellous. Everything I think in my heart is translated into an image in your mind. Where shall I go when I want to keep a secret?'

**M. Another example of continuity through intention.** Mu, the Zhou Emperor, had been hunting in the west. He climbed the Kun Lun Mountains, went as far as Mount Yen, and then returned towards China. On his way back an inventor called Yen Shi was presented to him. 'What can you do?' asked the emperor... 'Will your majesty be pleased to allow me to show him?' said the inventor... 'I will give you a day,' said the emperor. - When the day arrived, Yen Shi presented himself before the emperor with an escort. 'Who are they?' asked the emperor. 'They are my creatures,'

said Yen Shi, 'they will act the comedy'.. The emperor looked at them stupefied. Yen Shi's automatons walked, raising and lowering their heads, moving like real men. When one touched them on the chin, they sang, and quite well. When one took them by the hand, they danced in rhythm. They did everything one could imagine. - The emperor decided to show them to his harem as an amusement. But, whilst playing the comedy, the automatons made eyes at the women. The emperor was furious, and was going to put Yen Shi to death, thinking that he had introduced real men. Then the latter opened up his automatons and showed the emperor that they were made of leather, wood, paint and varnish. Moreover all the viscera had been modelled and Yen Shi showed the emperor that (in conformity with Chinese physiology), when one removed the heart from an automaton, his mouth became dumb; when one removed the liver, his eyes could no longer see; and when one removed the kidneys, his feet could no longer move\*. - 'It is marvellous,' said the emperor, calmed; 'you are almost as able as the Principle, the author of all things'.. .. And he ordered that the automatons should be put in the wagons and returned to his capital. - Nothing like that has ever been seen since. The disciples of Ban Shu, inventor of the famous tower of approach used in sieges, and of Mo Zi, philosopher-inventor of the automatic falcon, in vain pressed these two masters to do what Yen Shi had done. They did not even dare try (as they lacked the strength of will needed to produce the continuity).

**N. Another example of continuity through intention.** When Gan Ying, the famous archer, drew his bow, birds and beasts delivered themselves to him, without waiting for the arrow. His disciple Fei Wei surpassed him. Fei Wei took Ji Chang as his disciple. He began by saying to him: 'First learn not to blink, then I will teach you archery.' - Ji Chang taught himself in the following way. When his wife was weaving, he lay on his back under the loom, fixing his eyes on the criss-cross threads and the shuttle which passed to and fro. After two years of this exercise, his eyes became so fixed that a point could touch them without making him blink. Then Ji Chang went to find Fei Wei, and told him that he was ready. 'Not yet,' said Fei Wei. 'You still need to learn to fix on a point. When you can see it enlarged (through the strength of your intention) to the point where it could not be missed, then come back and I will teach you archery.' - Ji Chang hung at his window a long yak-hair, on which clung a flea. He then exercised himself by fixing his sight on the flea when the sun passed behind it, and shone straight in his eyes.

\*Yen Shi moved his automatons by his will, by mental continuity. He therefore made the eyes. He showed the viscera to dupe the emperor and save his life.

Day after day the flea appeared bigger. After three years' practice it looked enormous, and he could distinguish its heart. When he became able to pierce the flea's heart without his arrow breaking the hair, he went to find Fei Wei. 'Now,' said the latter, 'you have learnt archery; there is nothing else I can teach you.'

- However Ji Chang told himself that he had no other rival in the world but his master, and he resolved to do away with him (in one of those contests of skill that archers held in those times). The two men met on a plain, took up their positions, and shot against each other simultaneously, the number of arrows having been fixed. At each shot the arrows struck each other at the half-way point, and fell dead without raising any dust. But Ji Chang had put an extra arrow in his quiver, which he shot last, intending to pierce his unarmed master. Fei Wei parried the arrow with a spiny branch (which he had just time to pick up, as he had not suspected treachery). Then, having put down their bows, the two men saluted each other on the ground, weeping with emotion and promising to be like father and son to each other. They also vowed to each other, with a blood bond, not to tell anyone the secret of their art (of mental continuity).

**O. Another example of the efficacy of the will.** Zao Fu learnt the art of the charioteer from Tai Dou. When he went as a disciple to his master's house, he began by serving him with great humility. For three years Tai Dou did not speak a word to him. Zao Fu increased his submissiveness. At last Tai Dou said to him: 'According to the old saying, the apprentice archer must be as flexible as a willow cane, and the apprentice founder as supple as a fur. You now have more or less what is required. Watch what I am going to show you. When you can do the same, you will be capable of taking the reins of a six-horse chariot.' - 'Good,' said Zao Fu. - Then Tai Dou set up a horizontal pole scarcely wide enough to place a foot on, and started walking step by step, steadily, from one end to the other, coming and going without putting a foot wrong. - Three days later, Zao Fu did it equally well. Surprised, Tai Dou said to him: 'How able you are. How quickly you have succeeded. You now possess the secret of driving a chariot. The concentration of your interior faculties on the movement of your feet allows you to walk on the pole so steadily. Concentrate your faculties with the same intensity on the reins of your team, so that, through your hand, your mind acts on the horses' bits, and your will on theirs. Then you will be able to describe perfect circles and trace perfect right angles, and make your team walk without becoming tired out. Once more, your mind must be one with the reins and the bits; that is the whole secret. Once you have that, you will need to use neither your eyes nor the whip. The team will be entirely in your power

and the twenty-four shoes of your six horses will settle in cadence; their evolutions will be mathematically precise; you will go safely where the road is just wide enough for your wheels, where the path is just wide enough for your horses' feet. There is nothing else I can teach you; you know now as much as I do\*.'

P. Hei Luan of Wei had treacherously assassinated Qiu Bingzhang. His son, Lai Dan, sought revenge for his father's death. Now Lai Dan, although brave, was not strong; whereas Hei Luan was a colossus who had no more fear of Lai Dan than of a chicken. - Shen Tuo, a friend of Lai Dan, said to him: 'You want Hei Luan, but he is stronger than you; what can be done about that?' - 'Give me some advice,' said Lai Dan, bursting into tears. - 'I have heard tell,' said Shen Tuo, 'that in the Principality of Wei the Kong Zhou family keep three marvellous swords, which belonged to the last Yin emperor, and with which a child could stop an army. Borrow them.' - Lai Dan went to Wei, to Kong Zhou's home, and offered himself, his wife and children, as slaves, in exchange for what he wanted. - 'I will lend you one sword,' said Kong Zhou; 'the first sends out lightning, the second is invisible, and the third cuts through anything. These swords have now been kept unused in my family for thirteen generations. Which one do you want?' - 'The third,' said Lai Dan. - Then Kong Zhou accepted Lai Dan as a client of his clan. Seven days later, after a special feast, he gave him the sword, and Lai Dan prostrated himself to receive it. Armed with this weapon, Lai Dan went in search of Hei Luan. He found him in a drunken stupor and cut through him three times between the shoulders and the waist, without arousing him. Outside he met Hei Luan's son, and cut through him three times, in the same way. All his blows cut through the bodies without encountering any resistance, but the cut joined itself together after the blade had passed. When he saw that his marvellous sword did not kill, Lai Dan fled, heart-broken. - However Hei Luan awoke complaining to his wife for not having covered him better whilst he slept. 'I have taken cold,' he said; 'my neck and kidneys are numb.' - During this time his son had come inside. The son said: 'Lai Dan could have been here. Outside he gave me three blows which have had exactly the same effect on me\*\*.'

\*Commentary: Any hesitation, absent-mindedness, vertigo, comes because the mind is not master of the member or instrument used. A defect in the continuum blocks the intention.

\*\*This sword's marvellous property was that when it cut, it split neither the cohesion nor the continuity.



**Q.** During the wanderings of Emperor Mu of the Zhou dynasty, the Rong tribe of the west gave him an extraordinary sword of asbestos tissue. The eighteen inch sword cut through jade like mud. When the tissue was dirty, it could be put in the fire, and would come out white as snow. Some have doubted these facts, but they are correct.

## Chapter 6. Fate.

**A.** Energy said to Fate: 'You are not as good as I am.' - 'Why not?' asked Fate. - 'Because,' said Energy, 'I am the one who procures longevity, success, nobility, and wealth, for men.' - 'Ah,' said Fate, 'if that were the case, is that a good reason for you to glorify yourself so? Peng Zu lived for eight centuries, much longer than Yao and Shun, without having more merit than they had. Yen Yuan, so wise, died at thirty-two, whereas many fools reach an advanced age. Zhong Ni, who was as worthy as any prince of his times, experienced great misfortune at Chen and Cai. Emperor Zhou of the Yin\* dynasty occupied a throne although he was not as worthy as the three unfortunate paragons Wei Zi, Ji Zi, and Bi Gan. Ji Zha of Wu, who merited the greatest honours, got no recognition; whereas Tian Heng, absolutely unworthy, got the Kingdom of Qi. Bo Yi and Shu Qi, so noble, died of starvation at Shou Yang, whereas Ji Shi became rich at Zhan Qin. If you really made these share-outs, why did you make them as if you were blindfolded?' - 'If I did not do it, then it was you, Fate, who did it, and the blame falls back on you.' - 'Pardon,' said Fate, 'I did nothing. I push (I make the wheel turn), then I let go. One is fated to live a long time, and another not; one succeeds, and another does not; one becomes illustrious, and another does not; one becomes rich, and another poor. I do nothing; I even know nothing of it; it comes from itself.'

**B.** Bei Gong Zi said to Xi Men Zi: 'I was born at the same time and come from the same lineage as you; there is scarcely any difference between our features, language, and bearing; however, you succeed, you are liked, relished, honoured, and praised, whereas quite the opposite happens to me. We have tried our fortune using the same means; you have succeeded in everything, I in nothing. I am badly clothed, nourished, lodged, and walk on foot; whereas you live in luxury and abundance, and only go out in a quadriga. And in your private, as well as your public, life, you excel so much that I no longer dare compare myself with you.' - 'I think,' said Xi Men Zi, 'that the difference in our condition comes from the difference in our conduct. You must conduct yourself less well than I do.' - Most humiliated, Bei Gong Zi did not know what to say, and went away quite nonplussed. In the street he met the Master of the Eastern Suburb, who said to him: 'Where are you going, looking like that?' - Bei Gong Zi told him of his perplexity. 'Let us go back together,' said the Master. 'I will sort out this affront.' - When they arrived at Xi Men Zi's home, the Master asked him: 'What did you say to Bei Gong Zi to affront him so?' - 'I told him,' said Xi Men Zi, 'that I considered the difference in our position to have come

from the difference in our conduct.' - 'Nothing of the kind,' said the Master. 'This is how it should be explained. Bei Gong Zi is well gifted, but has a bad destiny. You, Xi Men Zi, are badly gifted, but have a good destiny. Your success is not due to your qualities; his failures are not due to his inability. You have not made yourself what you are, it is fate that has done that. If therefore you, the fortunate one, have humiliated him; if he, the gifted one, has felt shame, it is because both of you are ignorant of what you are.' - 'Say no more, Master,' said Xi Men Zi, 'I will not act like that again.' - When Bei Gong Zi got home, he found his coarse robe warmer than a fox or badger fur; his coarse food seemed delicious; his hovel seemed like a palace, and his screen a carriage. The light shone inside him, and, until his death, he paid no further attention to social distinctions. - The Master of the Eastern Suburb learnt of his changed attitude, and said: 'After a very long sleep (in ignorance), a word has been enough to wake this man, and change him in a lasting way.'

C. Guan Zhong and Bao Shu Ya, both from Qi\*, were close friends. Guan Zhong followed Prince Jiu, and Bao Shu Ya followed Prince Xiao Bo. A revolution broke out because Duke Xi of Qi had given preference to Wu Zhi, the son of a favourite concubine, naming him as his successor when he died. Guan Zhong and Shao Hu sought refuge in Lu, with Prince Jiu; whereas Bao Shu Ya fled to Ju, with Prince Xiao Bo. These two princes then contended for the throne, and declared war on each other. Guan Zhong fought on the side of Jiu when the latter marched on Ju, and let fly an arrow at Xiao Bo which would have killed him, had it not hit the buckle of his belt. Xiao Bo won, and demanded that the rulers of Lu put his rival Jiu to death, which they did. Shao Hu perished, and Guan Zhong was imprisoned. - Then Bao Shu Ya said to his protegee Xiao Bo, who had become Duke Huan: 'Guan Zhong is a most able politician.' - 'I know that full well,' said the duke; 'but I hate him for having nearly killed me.' - Bao Shu Ya said: 'A wise prince should know how to suppress his personal resentments. Inferiors have to do that continually with regard to their superiors; a superior should sometimes do it for one of his inferiors. If you intend to become supreme ruler, Guan Zhong is the only man who can make your plan succeed. You should give him amnesty.' - The duke therefore claimed Guan Zhong back, implying it was in order to put him to death. He was sent from Lu in bonds. Bao Shu Ya went out to meet him in the suburbs, where he removed his bonds. Duke Huan dressed him in a manner befitting the dignity of a prime minister. Bao Shu Ya became his inferior. The duke treated Guan Zhong as a son, and he called him father. Guan Zhong made the duke supreme ruler. - Often he said with a sigh: 'When I did business with Bao Shu Ya in my youth, and I gave myself the better share, Bao Shu

Ya excused me because of my poverty. When, later, he succeeded in politics and I was at the bottom, he told himself that my time had not yet come, and he never doubted me. When I took flight after the rout of Prince Jiu, Bao Shu Ya did not judge me a coward, but excused me because I should save myself as I still had my old mother. When I was imprisoned, Bao Shu Ya still kept his regard for me, knowing that the only dishonour for me was to be idle without working for the good of the state. Ah, if I owe my life to my parents, I owe more to Bao Shu Ya who has understood my soul.' - Since then, it has been customary to admire the disinterested friendship of Bao Shu Ya for Guan Zhong, to praise Duke Huan for his magnanimity and discernment of men. In reality, in this affair, one should speak neither of friendship nor discernment. The truth is that there has been neither intervention on the part of the actors, nor change of fortune. It was all a play of blind fate. If Shao Hu perished, it was because he had to. If Bao Shu Ya patronised Guan Zhong, it was because he had to do so. If Duke Huan pardoned Guan Zhong, it was because he had to do so. These are necessities of fate, and nothing more. - It was the same at the end of the career of Guan Zhong. When he had taken to his bed, the duke visited him and said: 'Father Zhong, you are very ill; I must allude to what one does not name (death); if your illness gets worse (to the point of carrying you off), whom should I take as minister in your place?' - 'Whomever you wish,' said the dying one. - 'Would Bao Shu Ya be suitable?' asked the duke. - 'No,' said Guan Zhong; 'his ideals are too high; he scorns those who do not come up to them, and never forgets a fault. If you were to take him as minister, you and the people would suffer. You would not be able to bear him for long.' - 'Then whom should I take?' said the duke. - 'If I must speak,' said Guan Zhong, 'take Xi Peng, he will be all right. He is equally at ease with superiors and inferiors. The chimerical envy of equalling the virtue of the Yellow Emperor absorbs him. Transcendent vision belongs to Sages of the first order, practical vision belongs to Sages of the second order. To impose one's wisdom on men gives them an aversion to it, to make them forget one's wisdom gives them a liking for it. Xi Peng is not a Sage of the first order; he has, as a Sage of the second order, the art of effacing himself. Furthermore, he and his family are unknown. That is why I judge him suitable for the post of prime minister.' - What can one say of that? Guan Zhong did not recommend Bao Shu Ya, because the latter should not be recommended; he supported Xi Peng, because he should support him. Fortune first and misfortune later, misfortune first and fortune later; in all the vicissitudes of destiny, nothing comes from man (wished, or done, by him); all is from blind fate.

D. Deng Xi could discuss the pros and cons of a question, in a flood

of inexhaustible words. Zi Chan\* had made a new code for the Principality of Zheng, which many criticised, and which Deng Xi derided. Zi Chan dealt severely with his detractors, and had Deng Xi put to death. In doing that, he did not act, but served fate. Deng Xi had to die; he had to turn against Zi Chan in derision, and thereby provoke his own end. To be born and to die at one's time, these two things are blessings. Not to be born, not to die, at one's time, these are two misfortunes. The diverse lots which fall on one or another do so, not from their own actions, but from fate. They are unpredictable. That is why, in speaking of them, one uses the expressions, mystery without rule, way which heaven alone knows, inscrutable obscurity, law of heaven acting of itself, and other analogies. It all comes down to saying that heaven and earth, that the knowledge of the Sages, that shades and demons, can do nothing against fate. According to its caprice, fate annihilates or enlightens, crushes or caresses, delays or prevents.

E. Ji Liang, a friend of Yang Zhu, had fallen ill, and after seven days was near the end. Shedding tears, his son ran to all the surrounding doctors. The invalid said to Yang Zhu: 'Try to get some sense into my imbecile of a son'... Yang Zhu therefore recited to the son the verse: 'What heaven does not know (the future), how can man guess it? It is not true that heaven blesses, or curses, anyone. We know, you and I, that fate is blind and inescapable. What can doctors and magicians do about that?' - But the son did not desist, and brought three doctors, a Jiao, a Yu, and a Lu. All three examined the patient, one after the other. - The Jiao said: 'In your case heat and cold are in disequilibrium, empty and full are out of proportion; you have eaten, played, thought, and tired yourself too much; your illness is natural, and not the effect of some evil influx; although serious, it can be cured'... 'This one,' said Ji Liang, 'recites the claptrap of the books; send him away without more ado.' - The Yu said to the patient: 'In your case, you came from your mother's womb with a defective vitality, and afterwards took in more milk than you could digest. The origin of your illness goes back to that time. As it is inveterate, it can hardly be completely cured'... 'This one speaks well,' said Ji Liang; 'we should invite him to dinner.' - The Lu said to the patient: 'Neither heaven, nor man, nor a spectre, are the cause of your illness. Born with a composite body, you are subject to the law of dissolution, and must understand that the time approaches; no medicine will do anything for you'... 'This one has spirit,' said Ji Liang; 'we should pay him generously.' - Ji Liang took no medicine, and was completely cured (fate). - Caring for life does not lengthen it, lack of care does not shorten it. A high regard for the body does not improve it, contempt for it does not cause it to deteriorate. In this matter the consequences do not correspond

\*TH page 175 seq.

to the actions. Often they seem even diametrically opposite, without being so in reality, for fate has no opposite. One lives or one dies, because one should live or die. Care, or negligence, of life, of the body, do nothing, neither one way nor the other. - That is why You Xiong said to King Wen: 'Man can neither add to, nor take away, from his stature; all his calculations can do nothing about that'... In the same vein, Lao Dan said to Guan Yin Zi: 'When heaven does not wish something, who can say why?' In other words, it is better to keep oneself in peace, than to try to know the intentions of heaven, to predict what is good-omened and ill-omened. (Vain calculations, all being ruled by unpredictable, inescapable, blind fate).

**F.** Yang Bu, the younger brother of Yang Zhu, said to his older brother: 'There are men of quite similar age, appearance, with all the natural gifts, who differ completely in length of life, luck, and success. I cannot explain this mystery to myself.' - Yang Zhu replied: 'You have again forgotten the old saying which I have repeated to you so often: "The mystery that one cannot explain is fate. It is made of impenetrable obscurities, of inexplicable complications, of actions and omissions which add to each other day by day. Those who believe in fate, no longer believe that, through their own efforts, they can prolong their life, succeed in their enterprises, or avoid misfortune. They no longer count on anything, knowing themselves to be playthings of a blind destiny. Straight, and of integrity, they do not lean in any direction; they no longer distress themselves nor rejoice about anything; they no longer act, but let all things go"... The following words of the Yellow Emperor sum up well the conduct of the enlightened: 'The superior man should remain inert as a corpse, and only move himself passively, because he is moved. He should not reason about his inertia or about his movements. He should never be preoccupied with the advice of men, and never modify his feelings after theirs. He should take his own road, following his personal way. For no one can upset him,' (fate alone disposing of him).

**G.** Four men lived together throughout their life, without being occupied with each other's feelings. Four others likewise spent their lives, without communicating any plan to each other. Four others without showing anything to each other. Four others without ever discussing anything. Four others without even looking at each other. ... All these live as men ruled by fate should do\*. - What seems favourable, turns out to be fatal. What seems fatal, turns out afterwards to be favourable. Why should men spend their lives in senseless efforts to understand life's confusions, to penetrate

\*Absurd introduction; an exercise of parallel phrases.

obscure mysteries? Wouldn't it be better, not to fear misfortune, to move or stay calm according to need, with a deep conviction that the mind understands nothing and the will can do nothing? He who has truly understood this, should apply it to others, as to himself. If he were to govern men according to any other principles, it would be like being voluntarily blind and deaf, like throwing them and himself into a pit. - Let us recapitulate: Life and death, fortune and misfortune, depend on fate, on the horoscope. Whoever should complain of dying young, of being poor or afflicted, shows that he is ignorant of the law. He who looks into the face of death without fear, and bears misfortune without complaining, shows that he knows the law. The conjectures of so-called Sages, on more and less, full and empty, good and bad luck, never result in certainty; after all their calculations, the result may be positive or negative, without their knowing why. Whether one calculates or not, the same thing happens. Salvation and ruin do not depend on previous knowledge. One is saved because he should be saved, one perishes because he should perish.

H. Duke Jing of Qi had made an excursion to the north of Mount Niu Shan and was returning to his capital. When he saw it from afar he was touched to the point of shedding tears, and cried out: 'O my beautiful town, so well populated, why does the time approach when I must leave you?... Ah, if only men did not have to die!' - Two of the duke's escort, Shi Kong and Liang Qiu Ju, wept also, in order to humour him, and said: 'If the thought of death to us horsemen of quite modest estate is painful, how much more must it be for you, Lord!' - Yen Zi, an educated person who also accompanied the duke, burst out laughing. - The duke saw him. Wiping his tears, he looked straight at Yen Zi, and asked him: 'Whilst I weep, and these two men with me, what is it that makes you laugh?' - 'I think,' said Yen Zi, 'that if in accordance with your wish, men did not die, the wise Dukes Tai and Huan and the brave Dukes Zhuang and Ling, your ancestors, would still be alive. If they were still alive, the oldest would sit on the throne, and you, his far-off descendant, would no doubt be busy looking after some farm worked on a share basis. Do you not owe the throne to the fact that, being dead, your ancestors are no longer here? Through their successive disappearance, the throne has devolved on you. Is there not in your regrets that men should die, some ingratitude towards those who have done you the service of dying? And these two horsemen, who wept with you to humour you, are they not foolish flatterers? These are the thoughts that made me laugh.' - Ashamed of his unreasonably sentimental attack, the duke drank a full measure (of wine) as a penalty, then inflicted the two horsemen with the task of emptying two measures each.

I. A certain Dong Men Wu of Wei lost his son, and did not cry. Someone who lived with him, said to him: 'You clearly loved your son, so how is it, now that he is dead, you do not cry?' Dong Men Wu said: 'A long time ago, during many years before his birth, I lived without this son, and was not sad. Now that he is dead, I take myself back to that time, think as though I had never had him, and no longer sadden myself. Moreover, what's the good of it?... Farmers worry about their harvests, merchants about their trading, artisans about their craft, officials about their positions. Now all that depends on circumstances outside their will. The farmer needs rain, the merchant luck, the craftsman work, the official an opportunity to distinguish himself. These circumstances and opportunities depend uniquely on fate.'



Chapter 7. Yang Zhu\*.

A. Yang Zhu was travelling in the land of Lu, where he stayed with the Meng family. Master Meng asked him: 'Isn't it enough to be a man (the most noble of creatures)? Is it necessary to trouble oneself (as you do) in order to become famous?' - 'Fame,' said Yang Zhu, 'brings fortune.' - 'And then?' - 'Then comes nobility.' - 'And then?' - 'Then comes death.' - 'Then one troubles oneself in order to die,' said Master Meng. - 'Not at all,' said Yang Zhu; 'it is to transmit one's reputation to one's descendants after death.' - 'Is it quite certain that they will inherit it?' said Master Meng. 'Could it not happen that those who have struggled and suffered to become famous may transmit nothing to their descendants; whereas those who have mediocre or bad lives, succeed in raising their families? Thus Guan Zhong, minister of the Duke of Qi, who served his master with the greatest humility, even to the point of imitating his vices, left nothing to his family. Whereas Tian Heng, another minister of Qi, who in each and everything opposed the duke, his master, managed to leave his descendants the duchy which he had usurped. In these two parallel cases, the meritorious reputation of Guan Zhong brought only poverty to his descendants, whereas Tian Heng's bad reputation brought fortune to his family. - Fame is so often attached to a false premise or appearance. They glorify Yao and Shun for having abdicated in favour of Xu You and Shan Guan. In reality their abdication was but a vain show. They enjoyed the advantages of imperial dignity until their death. Their glory is a false glory. - Whereas Bo Yi and Shu Qi, who truly renounced their paternal fiefs and died of starvation on Mount Shou Yang, for the cause of loyalty, are mourned by some, mocked by others, but glorified by no one. In these matters, who can distinguish the true from the false?'

B. Yang Zhu said: 'Out of a thousand men not one lives to be a hundred. But let us assume that, out of a thousand there was a centenarian. A great part of his life would have been spent in the weakness of early childhood and the decrepitude of old age. A great part would have been consumed by sleep at night, and distractions by day. A great part would have been made barren through sorrow or fear. There would remain only a relatively small fraction of action and enjoyment. - But what made him act? What did he enjoy?... Would it be the beauty of form and sound? But one soon takes these for granted, and the pleasure does not last... Would it be the law, with its rewards and punishments, its stigmas and distinctions? But these motives are too weak. Is blame to

\*It is to Lie Zi and Zhuang Zi that we owe what we know of this egoistical, epicurean, philosopher, whom Mencius criticized greatly; assuming that what they say of him is true.

be feared so much? Is a posthumous title so enviable? Is there really a case, to give up the pleasure of the eyes and ears, to apply the moral brake to one's exterior and interior life, for so little? Is it less hard to spend one's life thus, in privation and constraint, than to spend it in prison and in shackles? No, without doubt. Thus the ancients, who knew that life and death are two alternating, passing, phases, let their instincts manifest themselves liberally, without constraining their natural appetites and without depriving their body of its pleasures. Praise or blame mattered little to them, either during life or after death. They let their own nature have its satisfaction, and let the others have theirs.'

C. Yang Zhu said: 'Beings differ in life, but not in death. During life, some are wise, others fools, some are noble, others base; at death they are all equally a mass of putrifying flesh. This difference in life and equality in death is the work of fate. One should not consider wise and foolish, noble and base, as real entities; they are only qualities shared out by chance amongst the mass of men. Whatever the duration and kind of life, it is terminated by death. The good, wise, bad, and foolish, all die equally. On the death of the Emperors Yao and Shun and the tyrants Jie and Zhou, there remained only putrid corpses, which were impossible to distinguish. Therefore, live the present life without being preoccupied with what follows after death.'

D. Yang Zhu said: 'It was from an excess of loyalty that Bo Yi let himself die of starvation; Zhan Qin made his line extinct through an excess of continence. That is where ignorance of true principles leads the best of people.' - Yang Zhu said: 'Yen Xian of Lu was poor, Zi Gong of Wei was rich. Yen Xian's poverty shortened his life, Zi Gong's wealth wore him out with worry. But, if poverty and wealth are equally harmful, then what can one do? This; live happily and even poverty can do no harm (because one is not affected by it). Wealth will also do no harm (because one will not wear oneself out with worry).' - Yang Zhu quoted: "'To help oneself during life, and to cease at death;" I like this old proverb. By "help" I mean procuring the comforts of life, food, warmth, and so on. By "cease at death" I do not mean that the customary lamentations should be done away with, but only waste, such as the pearl or jade put in the corpse's mouth, the rich clothing, the sacrificial victims, and the objects offered for the dead.'

E. Yen Pingzhong, a disciple of Mo Zi, asked Guan Zhong, a politician with Daoist leanings, how the living should be treated. The latter replied: 'One should favour their natural leanings, without hindrance.' - 'Please explain further,' said Yen Pingzhong. - Guan

Zhong continued: 'They should be given complete freedom to listen, look, smell, taste, and every opportunity for bodily comfort and repose of the mind. Any restriction put on any of these faculties is against nature, and is a tyranny. To be free from all constraint, to be able to satisfy one's instincts, day by day until death, is what I call living. To be constrained, to be taken to task, to be always suffering, that, in my opinion, is not living. And now that I have told you how to treat the living, can you please tell me how the dead should be treated?' - 'It matters little how one treats the dead,' said Yen Pingzhong, (the body being like cast off clothing). 'Whether one should burn, submerge, bury, expose them, tie them in straw and throw them in the river, or dress them richly and put them in a sarcophagus or bier, all comes down to the same thing.' - Looking at his friends who had been listening to the conversation, Guan Zhong said: 'He and I understand the nature of life and death.'

F. When Zi Chan was prime minister of the Principality of Zheng he spent three years making innovations which were beneficial to the good people, but which discontented a number of the aristocracy. Now Zi Chan had two brothers, an older called Chao, and a younger called Mu. Chao was a drunkard. Mu was a debauchee. One could smell wine and dregs a hundred paces from Chao's door, because he had lost all sense of decency and prudence from his habitual drunkenness. For his harem Mu took up an entire quarter, which he filled any way he could, and which he seldom left. Mortified by his two brothers' bad conduct, which provided a theme for the jeers of his enemies, Zi Chan secretly consulted Deng Xi. 'I fear,' he said, 'that the only thing people will say of me is that I have not the requisite ability to rule the state, because I am unable to reform my brothers. I beg you to give me some advice.' - 'You should have intervened earlier,' said Deng Xi. 'Try to make them understand the value of life, the importance of decorum and modesty.' - Zi Chan lectured his brothers on the three following points: That man differs from the animals through reason, rites, and morality; that satiating bestial passions wears out life and ruins reputation; that if they should rehabilitate themselves, they could receive positions. - Far from being moved by these arguments, Chao and Mu replied: 'We have known all that for a long time, and we decided to take no account of it many years ago. Death ends everything, irrevocably; what matters, in our opinion, is enjoying life. We are not at all interested in making life like a living death through ritual, moral, and other constraints. To satiate one's instincts, and exhaust every pleasure, that is real living. Our only regret is that the capacity of our bellies is less than our appetite, and the strength of our bodies does not match the extent of our lust. What do

we care if men speak badly of us, and if we wear out our lives. Do not think that we are men who can be intimidated or won over. We have quite other tastes to you. You rule the exterior life, making men suffer because their inner inclinations are thereby compromised. We believe that letting one's instincts have free rein, makes men happy. Perhaps you may succeed in imposing your system on a principality. Our own system is spontaneously admitted by princes and subjects of the whole empire. Thank you for your opinion. We are pleased we have had the opportunity to explain ours to you.' - Quite bewildered, Zi Chan could find no words to reply. He consulted Deng Xi again, who said to him: 'You were wrong in not realising that your brothers see more clearly than you. How can there be men who admire you? What good can you do for the Principality of Zheng?'

**G.** Duan Mushu of Wei, a rich contemporary of Zi Gong, used the great fortune amassed by his ancestors to give pleasure to himself and others. In buildings, gardens, food, clothes, music, and harem, he eclipsed the princes of Qi and Chu. For himself and his guests he satisfied all desires of the heart, ears, eyes, and stomach, bringing for this purpose the rarest objects from the farthest lands. He travelled in the same luxury, and with the same commodities. Guests ran to him by the hundred, the fire never went out in his kitchens, music never ceased to resound in his halls. He spread his surplus wealth amongst his relatives, fellow citizens, and his countrymen. He sustained this pace for sixty years. Then, feeling his strength leaving him, and death approaching, in one year he distributed all his possessions as presents, without giving anything to his children. He stripped himself so well, that, during his last illness he lacked the appropriate medicines, and, after his death, there was no money for his funeral. Those who had benefited from his generosity, clubbed together, buried him, and made up a nest-egg for his descendants... What should one think of the conduct of this man?... Qin Gu Li judged that he had conducted himself as a fool, and dishonoured his ancestors. Duan Gan Sheng judged that he had conducted himself like a superior man, and was much wiser than his economical ancestors. He acted contrary to common sense, but in conformity with superior sense. This prodigy was wiser than all the princes of Wei who have been criticised. (Thus judged the epicurean Yang Zhu).

**H.** Meng Sun Yang asked Yang Zhu if a man who watched over his life and looked after his body could avoid death. - 'He would certainly live longer,' said Yang Zhu. 'But is it worth giving oneself so much trouble, making so much effort, in order to live longer? The world has always been, and always will be, full of passion, danger, evil, and vicissitudes. One hears and sees always

the same things; even changes lead to nothing new. After existing a hundred years, those who do not die of sadness, die of boredom.' - 'Then,' said Meng Sun Yang, 'according to you, suicide would be the ideal?' - 'Not at all,' said Yang Zhu. 'One should bear with life as long as it lasts, whilst trying to obtain all possible satisfaction from it. One should accept death when it comes, by consoling oneself with the thought that everything is going to end. One cannot prolong one's life, but one should not hasten one's death.'

**I.** Yang Zhu said: 'Bo Cheng Zi Gao would not sacrifice a hair of his body for the love of anything. He left the capital and became a labourer in a remote corner. The Great Yu, on the other hand, expended himself and quite wore himself out for others. - The ancients didn't give a hair to the state, and would not accept that anyone should devote himself to them in the name of the state. It was in those times that individuals did nothing for the state, and the state did nothing for the individuals; and in those times the state went well.' - 'And you,' Qin Gu Li asked Yang Zhu, 'would you sacrifice a hair of your body for the good of the state?' - 'A hair,' said Yang Zhu, 'would scarcely benefit it.' - 'But if it did benefit it, would you sacrifice it?' insisted Qin Gu Li. Yang Zhu did not reply\*. - Qin Gu Li went out and told Meng Sun Yang of the conversation he had just had with Yang Zhu. 'Perhaps you have not understood the meaning of his thought,' said Meng Sun Yang. 'If you were offered a large sum of money for a bit of your skin, would you give it?'... 'Yes,' said Qin Gu Li. - 'And if you were offered a principality for one of your limbs, would you give it?'.. ... Qin Gu Li hesitated to reply, so Meng Sun Yang said: 'A hair is less than a bit of skin, a bit of skin is less than a limb. But, added up, many hairs make up as much as a bit of skin, many bits of skin make as much as a limb. A hair is part of the body, and therefore something precious.' - Qin Gu Li said: 'Master, I am not strong enough in dialectic to reply to your argument; but I feel that, if I could pass on our propositions, Lao Dan and Guan Yin Zi would approve yours (and Yang Zhu's), the Great Yu and Mo Zi would approve mine.' Meng Sun Yang changed the subject.

**J.** Yang Zhu said: 'They speak only good of Shun, Yu, Zhou Gong, and of Confucius; they speak only evil of Jie (the last Xia emperor) and of Zhou (the last Yin emperor)\*\*. - Now Shun was a labourer at He Yang, a potter at Lie Zhai, using his strength (a Daoist sin), neglecting his stomach, worrying his parents, and upsetting his brothers and sisters. He married when he was only thirty, and without permission. When Yao ceded the empire to him, he was old

\*From this comes Yang Zhu's reputation for egoism, which is only a particular aspect of his general epicureanism.

\*\*TH pages 40, 47, 114, 180, 59, 85.

and soft-witted. Then, since his son Shang Jun was incompetent, he had to cede the empire to Yu, and end his life in a morose old age; all things that are avoided by men who live according to nature. Kun, who failed to succeed in draining the waters, was put to death at Yu Shan. His son Yu served under the one who had thus treated his father, to the extent that he did not even go home to see and name his new-born son. He worked and struggled to the point where he was worn out and his hands and feet were covered in callosities. At last, when Shun ceded the empire to him, he shone with mediocrity, and ended up in a morose old age, something which men who live according to nature avoid. - After the death of Emperor Wu, during the youth of Emperor Cheng, Zhou (Duke of Zhou, brother of the defunct, uncle of the successor), charged with the regency, did not get on with the Duke of Shao, and was strongly criticised. He had to vanish for three years, put to death two of his brothers, and had difficulty in protecting his own life. He finished in a morose old age, which men who live according to nature avoid. - Confucius devoted himself to explaining the teachings of the old emperors, and making them acceptable to the princes of his times. In return for his efforts, they cut down the tree under which he was sheltering in Song, they moved him out of Wei, they surrounded him at Shang in the Principality of Zhou, and they blockaded him between Chen and Cai. He was provoked by Ji Shi, outraged by Yang Hu, and ended by reaching a morose old age, which those who live according to nature escape from. - These four Sages had not a single day of true contentment, during their life. After their death, their reputation increased through the ages. Is this vain posthumous renown a compensation for the true pleasure they deprived themselves of during their life? Nowadays they praise them, make offerings to them, without their knowing anything about it, no more than a block of wood or a pile of earth. - Whereas Jie, rich, strong, learned, feared, enjoyed all his pleasures, satisfied all his appetites, was glorious until his death, and had all that men who live according to nature desire. - Zhou also mocked at rites, and enjoyed himself until his death, in a way that men who live according to nature prefer. - These two men had, during their life, what they wanted. Now, without doubt, they call them fools, wicked, tyrants; but what can that do to them? They know nothing about it, no more than a block of wood or a pile of earth. - The four Sages suffered every ill, died sadly, and have only their vain renown as compensation. The two tyrants enjoyed all good things until their death, and do not suffer now from their bad reputation.' (Yang Zhu's epicureanism).

**K.** Yang Zhu was received by the King of Liang. He told the king that, with his recipe, it would be as easy to govern the empire as to turn one's hand over. The King of Liang said to him: 'Master,

you have a wife and a concubine, two persons that you cannot keep in peace; you have three measures of garden, which you don't know how to cultivate; and you dare tell me that, with your recipe, governing the empire would be as easy as turning over a hand. Are you making a fool of me?' - Yang Zhu said: 'Have you ever seen a shepherd drive a flock of a hundred sheep, walking peacefully behind with his whip, and letting the sheep go as they please? (That is my system, to leave each to his instinct). Whereas (with their system of artificial coercion) Yao pulled and Shun pushed, without succeeding in moving a single sheep. And as for my domestic affairs (women, and the garden) to which you have just referred, I will say only this. Fish big enough to swallow a boat are not found in ditches; strong-flying swans do not frequent ponds. The base bell and the major pipe are not suitable for making toy music. Those who are fitted to govern big things, do not like occupying themselves with trifles. I think you have understood me.'

**L.** Yang Zhu said: 'Things of the greatest antiquity have disappeared so completely that no one can count them any more. The affairs of the three August Ones are almost forgotten. Those of the five Sovereigns are confused like a dream. Of those of the three Emperors, we know only the hundred-thousandth part. Of contemporary affairs we know a ten-thousandth part. Of what one sees oneself, one retains a thousandth part. Great antiquity is so far away from us. Fu Xi reigned more than three hundred thousand years ago, and since then, in the world, there have been wise men and fools, beautiful and ugly things, successes and failures, good and evil. All these follow one another without cease, in a continuous chain, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. Is it worth the trouble of wearing out one's mind and body, to obtain a posthumous reputation as a good prince, which will last several centuries, and of which one will have no knowledge? It costs the pleasure of a lifetime, and does not refresh the bones after death.'

**M.** Yang Zhu said: 'Man partakes of heaven and earth. There is something of all five elements in him. He is the most transcendent of all beings gifted with life. He has neither claws nor teeth to defend himself, nor impenetrable skin, nor agile feet for fleeing, nor hair nor feathers which protect him from inclement weather. He draws his subsistence from other beings, all of which he dominates, not by force, but through his intelligence. It is intelligence that makes the nobility of man, and his superiority over the beings that are his inferiors, although many are stronger than he. To speak correctly, his body is not his (not his absolute domain); the fact that he cannot keep its integrity proves this. Beings are not his either (in the same sense); the fact that he cannot protect himself from those which are harmful, proves this. Man depends on

his body for life, and on beings for the maintenance of life. It is impossible, for man, to give himself life; and for beings, to give themselves being. He who enslaves men and beings for power or personal enjoyment, is not a Sage. He who fraternises with men and beings, seeking and letting each one seek his own natural good, is the most superior man of all.'

**N.** Yang Zhu said: 'Four desires disturb men, to the point of giving them no rest; they are, desire for long life, reputation, rank, and wealth. Those who have obtained these things, fearing they may be taken from them, are afraid of the living and the dead, of princes, and of punishments. They are always fearful, asking themselves if they will live or if they will die, because they have understood nothing of fate, and believe that exterior things have power over them. It is quite the opposite for men who entrust themselves to destiny, do not preoccupy themselves with length of life, and who disdain reputation, rank and wealth. Always satisfied, the latter enjoy an incomparable peace, because they have understood that, as everything is ruled by fate, nothing has power over them. - The Daoist ideal is the practice of agriculture in obscurity, producing only what one needs in order to live, and no more. The ancients have stressed that love causes half the troubles of men, and desire for well-being causes the rest. The Zhou proverb that farmers are, in their condition, the most happy of men, is also very true. They work from dawn till night, proud of their endurance. They find that nothing is as tasty as their wholesome vegetables. Their hardened bodies do not tire. If one made them spend a single day in the luxury and good cheer of townsfolk, they would feel ill; whereas a noble or a prince would perish if he had to live a single day as a farmer. The barbarians find that nothing in the empire is as good as what they have and like. Nature is satisfied when the necessities are provided for; any needs beyond that are superfluities of artificial civilization. - Once, in the Principality of Song, a countryman who was absolutely ignorant of the things of the town, spent the winter in rags scarcely able to protect him from freezing. When spring came along, he took them off and warmed himself naked in the sun. He found the warmth so good, that he said to his wife: "Perhaps they have never proposed this to our prince; if we do so, perhaps we will be rewarded"... A rich man of the land then said to him: "Once a peasant offered some cress to a prince, who, after eating it, was very poorly. The poor peasant was mocked by some, grumbled at by others. Take care that a similar misadventure does not happen to you, if you teach the prince to warm himself naked in the sun."

**O.** Yang Zhu said: 'Luxurious housing, beautiful clothes, good food and beautiful women; when one has all that, what more can one



want? He who desires more, is insatiable. Now insatiable people wear out their lives, like wood or paper eaten by worms. Egoistical and discontented, they are not loyal towards their princes, nor good to others. If they seem otherwise, it is only to appear loyal or good for their own vanity and reputation. - The ancient teaching says peace and co-operation between superiors and inferiors. - Yu Zi said: "Suppress the love of reputation, and there will be no more disappointments." Lao Zi said: "Reputation is not worth as much as the truth, yet they run after it more than the truth." Reputation should neither be sought nor avoided. For the efforts made to acquire it wear one out, but its peaceful possession comforts. Dishonour wears one also, through the sadness that it brings about. What one should avoid, is the acquisition of a false reputation, or the loss of true glory. The ideal is indifference; but few attain it.'

Chapter 8. Anecdotes.

**A.** When Lie Zi was a disciple of Master Lin of Hu Qiu, the latter said one day: 'When you can grasp what is behind you, I will teach you to grasp yourself.' - 'And what is behind me?' asked Lie Zi. - 'Your shadow,' said Master Lin of Hu Qiu; 'examine it.' - Lie Zi examined his shadow. He noted that when his body bent, the shadow became curved; that when his body straightened, the shadow became straight. He told himself that, of itself, the shadow was neither curved nor straight, but that it depended entirely on the shape of the body. And he drew, from this, the consequence that man should adapt himself in everything, and that nothing depended on him. That is the meaning of the formula: 'After having grasped what is behind, keep oneself still in front.' - Guan Yin Zi said to Lie Zi: 'As a sound is beautiful or ugly, so its echo is beautiful or ugly; when something grows, its shadow grows; when something diminishes, so does its shadow.' Reputation is the echo of man, conduct is the shadow of man. The proverb says: 'Watch over your words and your conduct, for your words will be repeated and your conduct imitated.' The Sage judges the inside from the outside; it is his way of prognosticating. He attributes to man what he has noticed in his manners. - Each one likes what he likes, and hates what he hates. The Emperors Tang and Wu reigned, because, having loved the people of the empire, they were repaid in kind. The tyrants Jie and Zhou perished, because, having hated the people of the empire, their hatred was returned to them. This is a great law, the summary of history. Since Shen Nong, Shun, and the three dynasties, all fortune and misfortune has arisen from this law. - Yen Hui said: 'What's the good of so many theories? I think it is enough to profit from opportunities'... Lie Zi said: 'I disagree with you. If one had more than the opportunity, if one had the thing in question, one could lose it through lawless conduct, as happened to Jie and Zhou. Those who are addicted to gluttony are worth no more than dogs or chickens. Those who know only fighting, are animals. No one respects these men, who are not men. Their dishonour brings about their downfall.'

**B.** Lie Zi wished to learn archery, and asked Guan Yin Zi to teach him. The latter wanted to know if he knew the purpose of archery. - 'No,' said Lie Zi. - 'Then go and find out,' said Guan Yin Zi, 'and then come back.' - Three years later, Lie Zi came back. - 'Do you know the purpose?' asked Guan Yin Zi. - 'Yes,' said Lie Zi. - 'Good,' said Guan Yin Zi; 'keep it clearly in your memory; watch that you do not forget it. The rule for any progress, is that before undertaking anything, one should know why. The Sage does not calculate whether he will succeed or run aground, the chances for and against. He fixes his aim, and then moves towards it.'

C. One speaks in vain of the Principle to arrogant and violent people. They lack what is necessary to understand it; their vices prevent them from being able to be taught and helped. To learn, one must believe that one does not know everything. That is the indispensable condition. Age is not an obstacle, intelligence is not always a means, submission of the mind is the essential. - An artist from Song took three years to sculpt a natural mulberry leaf in jade, for his prince. Lie Zi heard of this and said: 'If nature took so long, there would be very few leaves on the trees.' It is the same for the propagation of doctrines, the Sage goes back to the power inherent in the truth, not to artificial art.

D. Lie Zi was extremely poor. The suffering of hunger could be read on his emaciated face. A stranger who had come to visit minister Zi Yang, said to the latter: 'Lie Zi is a Sage; if you leave him in this misery, they will say that you do not think much of Sages.' - Zi Yang ordered an official to take some grain to Lie Zi. The latter came out of his house, saw the official, greeted him, thanked him, and refused it. The official went back with his grain. - When Lie Zi went back into his house, his wife looked at him sadly, beat her breasts with chagrin, and said: 'I thought that the wife and children of a Sage had some right to live happily. Now we are worn out with misery. The prince, who for a long time has been indifferent, has finally remembered us, and now you have refused his gifts. Must we die of starvation?' - 'No,' said Lie Zi laughing, 'the prince has not remembered me, he offered this gift at the prompting of another; just as he would have sent his hired ruffians, if someone had spoken badly of me. I cannot accept a gift made with such a motive.' (And Lie Zi was right, because he wished to owe nothing to Zi Yang, who was massacred shortly afterwards by the people of Zheng).

E. A certain Shi of Lu had two sons, one wise, the other brave. The wise one went and offered himself to the Marquis of Qi, who accepted him and nominated him tutor to his children. The brave one went and offered himself to the King of Chu, who was pleased with him and made him a wealthy and noble general. - Now a neighbour of Shi, called Meng, also had two sons, one wise and the other brave. As he was very poor, the luck of the Shi family filled him with envy, and he asked them how they had gone about it. They told him quite simply. - The wise Meng went straight away and offered himself to the King of Qin. The latter said: 'In these warlike times I need only soldiers; this literate who teaches goodness and fairness will harm my kingdom'... And he ordered him to be castrated and sent back home. - The brave Meng offered himself to the Marquis of Wei. The latter said: 'My state is small and weak and I must be careful not to annoy my great and formid-

able neighbours. I must stay peaceful. Any sign of warlike intentions could cost me my marquissate. I cannot employ this able man, without taking a grave risk. On the other hand, if I send him away without making him a cripple, he will go and offer himself to another prince, and ruin me'... He therefore ordered that he should be sent back home with one of his feet cut off. - When old Meng saw his two sons return mutilated, he beat his chest with sadness and went to reproach father Shi. The latter said to him: 'At fortunate times, one succeeds; at unfortunate times, only bad things happen. Your sons and mine took exactly the same steps. The results have been absolutely different. That has to do uniquely with destiny (at a bad moment) and not at all with the methods used. Fortune and misfortune are not ruled by mathematical laws. What succeeded yesterday, may go wrong today. What went wrong today, will perhaps go well tomorrow. Success comes from acting at the right moment, but there are no rules that allow one to determine that moment. The wisest are sometimes wrong about it. Even Kong Qiu and Lü Shang have known failures.' - When the Meng family had heard these explanations they were satisfied, and said: 'Thank you, don't say any more, we have understood.'

F. Duke Wen of Jin decided to attack Wei, which made his son, Prince Chu, laugh. 'Why are you laughing?' asked the duke. 'I am laughing,' said the prince, 'because of a misadventure that happened to one of my neighbours. This man went to town, in order to accuse his wife of infidelity. On the way he met a woman whom he fancied, and who responded to his advances. An instant later, he saw the parallel with his own wife, and realized that there were independent witnesses. He was paid in his own coin. Isn't this story laughable?'... The duke understood that his son was warning him that he would be attacked whilst he was attacking Wei. He gave up his expedition, and suddenly brought back his army. He had still not reached his capital when he learnt that an enemy had in fact already crossed his northern frontier. - Thieves abounded in the Principality of Jin. Now a certain Xi Yong, gifted with a particular kind of second sight, could recognize the thieves from their faces. The marquis employed him to uncover the thieves, and Xi Yong captured them by the hundred. Most satisfied, the marquis said to Zhao Wen Zi: 'A single man has almost cleaned out my principality of the thieves that infested it'... 'Believe me,' said Zhao Wen Zi, 'this man will be murdered, before he finishes his clean-up'... And, in fact, exasperated, the thieves who were left said to themselves: 'We are all going to perish if we do not rid ourselves of this Xi Yong'... Being all in agreement, they massacred Xi Yong. When the marquis learnt of this, he was distressed. He called Zhao Wen Zi and said to him: 'What you predicted, has happened; Xi Yong has been assassinated; what can I do now, to be rid of

the rest of the thieves?'... Zhao Wen Zi said: 'Do you remember the Zhou proverb, "wishing to see the fish at the bottom of the water is ill-omened, wishing to know hidden things brings unhappiness." One should never look too close. For you to get rid of thieves, it is enough to put good officials in charge, who will administer well, and inculcate a good sense of morality into the people'... The marquis did this, and soon, the remaining thieves found themselves objects of public disapproval. They all left and hid themselves in the land of Qin.

**G.** Confucius was returning from Wei to Lu. He stopped to contemplate the waterfall of He Liang\*, which drops from a height two hundred and forty feet, producing a torrent which boils over a length of ninety stages, so strong that neither fish nor reptile can dwell there. Now, before his eyes, a man crossed these tumultuous waters. Confucius had his disciples greet him, then he himself said: 'You are most able; have you a formula that allows you to trust yourself thus to these waters?' - 'Before going into the water,' said the man, 'I ensure that my heart is absolutely true and loyal, then I let myself go. My rectitude unites my body with the surge. Since I become one with it, it cannot harm me.' - 'Remember this,' said Confucius. 'Rectitude wins even the waters, how much more can it win men.'

**H.** Jian, prince apparent and son of King Ping of Chu, was slandered by Fei Wuji. He fled to Zheng, where he was assassinated. His son, Bai Gong, pondered how to get his revenge. He asked Confucius: 'Is there a chance that a plot would not be discovered?' - Confucius perceived his intention and did not reply. - Bai Gong went on: 'Can a stone thrown to the bottom of the water be discovered?' - 'Yes,' said Confucius; 'by a diver from the land of Wu.' - 'And water mixed with water, can that be discovered?' - 'Yes,' said Confucius. 'Yi Ya could tell that there was water from the River Zi and the River Sheng, mixed together.' - 'Then,' said Bai Gong, 'in your opinion, do you think that a conspiracy would be discovered?' - 'It would not,' said Confucius, 'if no one had spoken of it. For success in fishing or hunting, silence is necessary. The most effective speech is the one which is not heard; the most intensive action is that which is not seen. Imprudence and agitation produce nothing good. You betray your projects through your words and attitude.' - Bai Gong took no notice of this warning. He provoked an outbreak in which he perished.

**I.** Zhao Xiang Zi ordered Mu Zi, who was master of his hounds, to attack the Di (a nomadic tribe). Mu Zi won a victory, and took two of their encampments in a day. Mu Zi sent news of it to Zhao

\*Compare with chapter 2 I.

Xiang Zi. The latter heard it whilst eating, and became sad. - 'What is wrong?' asked his assistants. 'Two camps taken in a single day is good news. What is it that saddens you?' - 'I am thinking,' said Zhao Xiang Zi, 'that rivers only flood for three days, that storms only last a fraction of a day. My house is at the height of its fortune. Perhaps it is about to be ruined\*.' - Confucius heard of these words and said: 'The Prince of Zhao will prosper.' - In fact, it is sadness (with the prudence that results from it) which makes for prosperity, whereas happiness (with its lack of prudence) brings ruin. To win a victory is easy enough, but to keep its fruits is difficult, and only a wise ruler succeeds in doing that. Qi, Chu, Wu, and Yue, have won many victories, without keeping any of the advantages acquired. Only a prince imbued with wise doctrines will keep what he has conquered. It is wisdom that makes greater, not force... Confucius was so strong that he alone could lift the enormous bar which closed the door of the capital of Lu, but he never made a show of his strength. Mo Zi was a most able constructor of defensive and offensive war machines, but he never sought fame for this talent. Only by effacing oneself, can one keep one's acquisitions.

J. A man of Song practised humanity and justice. His family had been like that for three generations. - One day, without one being able to find out the cause, his black cow gave birth to an entirely white calf. Our man sent to Confucius to ask what this phenomenon portended. 'It is a good omen,' said Confucius; 'this calf should be sacrificed to the Sovereign on High.' - A year later, without any known cause, the father of the family became blind. - Soon after, his black cow gave birth to a second white calf. The father sent his son again to ask Confucius what this portended. The son said: 'After the last consultation, you lost your sight; what's the good of asking again?'... 'Go,' said the father. 'The words of the Sages sometimes appear wrong, but they prove right, given time. Let us believe that the time has not yet come. Go therefore.' - The son went and asked Confucius, who said again: 'It is a good omen. Offer it to the Sovereign on High'... The son reported the reply to his father, who ordered him to carry it out. - A year later, the son also became blind. - Now, suddenly, the Chus invaded Song and laid siege to its capital. The famine became so bad that families exchanged their children for food, and ground the bones of the dead to make a sort of food. All able-bodied men had to defend the ramparts. More than half of them perished. In this disaster, since the two blind ones were unable to be of any service, they were exempted from duty. When the siege was raised, they suddenly recovered their sight. Destiny had made them blind for their own safety.

\*Compare with Lao Zi, chapter 9.

**K.** In Song an adventurer asked Prince Yuan if he could show him what he could do. Having obtained permission, he walked on stilts higher than his body, and juggled with seven swords, five of which flew through the air, whilst his hands received or threw the other two. Full of admiration, Prince Yuan ordered that he should be paid generously. - Another adventurer learnt of this, and presented himself also to the prince, who was offended, and said: 'This fellow has only come because I treated the last one well'... And he had him put in prison and ill-treated for a month\*.

**L.** Duke Mu of Qin\*\* said to Bo Luo, his purveyor of horses: 'You are getting old. Have you a son or other relative who can take over from you?' - Bo Luo said: 'A good horse can be recognised by examining its bones and teeth, and my sons would be capable of that. But to recognise a horse fit for a prince, is more difficult, and my sons would not be capable of it. But, amongst my grooms, there is a certain Gao from Jiu Fang, who knows as much about it as I do. Try him.' - Duke Mu had the groom called to him, and gave him the task of finding him a princely horse. Gao came back three months later and announced that he had found a horse at Sha Qiu. 'What kind of horse is it?' asked the duke. - 'It's a red mare,' said Gao. - The duke ordered the beast to be brought to him, and found that it was a bay stallion. - Duke Mu was not amused. He called Bo Luo and said to him: 'Something is wrong. The one I sent on your recommendation, cannot even tell the sex or colour of a horse; what can he know of their qualities?' - Bo Luo said: 'Anyone can tell the sex and colour. Gao always goes straight to the bottom of things, without paying attention to details. He only considers the interior, which is what matters, and he neglects all the rest. If he has chosen a horse, it is certainly an animal of great value.' - The horse had been brought along, and it turned out that it was, in fact, a horse fit for a prince.

**M.** King Zhuang of Chu asked Zhan He: 'What should I do to govern well?' - 'I only know about governing myself, not the state,' said Zhan He. - 'Then,' asked the king, 'tell me what I should do to preserve the temple of my ancestors, the mounds of the Patron of the Earth and the Patron of the Harvests?' - Zhan He said: 'The domain of a well-ordered man is always in good order; that of a disordered man is always in disorder. The root is inside. You can draw your own conclusions.' - The King of Chu said: 'You have spoken wisely.'

**N.** Hu Qiu Zhang Ren said to Sun Shu Ao: 'Three things attract envy, hate, and unhappiness; they are a high rank, great power, and

\*Compare with E above. Same talent, not the same time.

\*\*TH page 148.

a high income.' - 'Not necessarily,' said Sun Shu Ao. 'The more I have risen in rank, the more humbly have I conducted myself. The more my power has increased, the more discreet I have been. The more my wealth has increased, the more I have distributed it. Thus I have incurred neither envy, hate, nor unhappiness.' - When Sun Shu Ao was close to death, he said to his son: 'The king has tried several times to make me accept a fief. I have always refused. When I am gone, he will probably offer you an endowment. I prohibit you from accepting any good land. If you must accept something, there is a hill with the ill-omened name of Qin Qiu, between Chu and Yue, where the people of those lands go to evoke the dead; ask for that land, and no one will envy you.' - As soon as Sun Shu Ao was dead, the king offered a good fief to his son, who begged him rather to give him Qin Qiu. His descendants have it still today.

O. Niu Que was a famous literate of Shang Di. Whilst he was going down to Han Dan, in open country, he was assailed by robbers who took everything, even his clothes, without his trying to stop them. He then went off without showing any sign of sadness. Astonished, a robber ran after him, and asked him why he was not distressed. 'Because,' said Niu Que, 'the Sage prefers life to possessions.' 'Ah,' said the robber, 'you are a Sage.' When he told the others, they said: 'If he is a Sage, he must be going to see the Prince of Zhao. He is going to accuse us, and we will be lost. Let's kill him first, whilst there is still time'... They ran after Niu Que and killed him. - Now a man of Yen who heard this story, assembled his family and said: 'If you ever meet robbers, don't do what Niu Que of Shang Di did'... Sometime later, the younger brother of this man was going to Qin when he met some robbers near the pass. Remembering the advice of his older brother, he put up all possible resistance. When the thieves left, he ran after them, demanding back what they had taken, and hurling insults. This was too much. 'We left you your life, against the usual custom,' they said to him. 'But since, by following us, you expose us to the risk of being captured, we shall have to kill you.' Four or five people who accompanied him, were killed with him. (Moral: Do not boast, efface yourself).

P. A certain Yu, a rich man of Liang, did not know what to do with his wealth. He built a terrace near the main road, put an orchestra there, and spent his time drinking and playing chess with all sorts of guests, mostly adventurers or fighters. One day when one of his guests had made a good move, Yu said laughingly, and without any malice: 'Oh, see how a buzzard has taken a worn-out field mouse' (it's only luck). - The players took it badly. 'This Yu,' they said to each other, 'has been rich too long. It has made



him arrogant. Let's put things right. We have been insulted; let us keep our honour.' - They fixed a day, came united in arms, and destroyed the Yu family by the sword and fire. (Moral: Luxury and arrogance cause loss).

**Q.** In the east, a certain Yuan Xing Mu who was travelling, collapsed on the road. Robber Qiu of Hu Fu, who was passing, put some food in his mouth. After the third mouthful, Yuan Xing Mu came round. - 'Who are you?' he asked. - 'I am Qiu from Hu Fu,' said the other. - 'Oh,' said Yuan Xing Mu, 'aren't you a robber? And you have made me eat your food? I am an honest man; I will not keep it!' - And, resting on both hands, our man tried to make himself vomit with such violent efforts that he expired there and then. - He acted stupidly. If Qiu of Hu Fu was a robber, his food had nothing to do with robbing. In applying to the food what should be applied to the robber, this Yuan Xing Mu showed that he was lacking in logic.

**R.** Zhu Li Shu served Duke Ao of Ju. Finding that he was treated too coldly, he left, and went to live as a hermit at the seaside, eating mackerel in summer, and acorns and chestnuts in winter. When Duke Ao died, Zhu Li Shu said farewell to his friends, and declared that he would commit suicide. - His friends said to him: 'You left the duke because he treated you coldly, and now you want to kill yourself because he is dead; you are lacking in logic.' - 'Not at all,' said Zhu Li Shu. 'I left the duke because he showed me too little favour. I am going to kill myself because, now, he can never show me favour. I want to teach the masters of the future to treat their officials fittingly, and leave officials the example of a more than usual devotion.' - This Zhu Li Shu sacrificed his life for a high ideal.

**S.** Yang Zhu said: 'When good goes away, evil comes. Inner sentiments reverberate outside. Therefore Sages watch over everything that emanates from within them.'

**T.** Yang Zhu's neighbour had lost one of his sheep. He collected all his people, and even called Yang Zhu's domestics, to help find it. - Yang Zhu said: 'Are so many people needed for just one of your sheep?' - 'It's because there are so many paths in the mountains,' said the other. - When the search-party returned, Yang Zhu asked if they had found it. 'No,' they said. - 'Why not?' - 'Because the paths subdivide to infinity, and it is impossible to scour them all.' - Yang Zhu became sad. He stopped laughing and talking. - After several days, his disciples, who were astonished by his melancholy, said to him: 'Losing one sheep is not a loss; and, moreover, it was not yours; why are you so upset?' - Yang Zhu

did not reply. His disciples could not understand him. - Meng Sun Yang went and told Xin Du Zi. A few days later Xin Du Zi came to Yang Zhu with Meng Sun Yang and spoke these words to him: 'In the land of Lu, three brothers studied goodness and fairness under the same master. When they returned home, their father asked them: "What is goodness and fairness?" "It is," said the older one, "sacrificing one's reputation for one's own good." "It is," said the younger one, "sacrificing oneself in order to acquire a reputation." "It is," said the youngest one, "taking care of oneself and one's reputation"... Thus these three pupils, of one and the same teacher, supported three different theses. Whose fault was it, the master's or theirs?' - Yang Zhu replied: 'Amongst the watermen of the rivers, many are bargemen or ferrymen. These men have apprentices, to whom they teach boat handling. Almost half of these apprentices drown. Whose fault is that? The master's or theirs? Did the master teach them to drown themselves?' - Xin Du Zi went out without saying anything. Outside, an unhappy Meng Sun Yang said: 'Why did you chatter like that? We don't know any more than we did before.' - 'You understand nothing,' said Xin Du Zi. 'Can't you see that I made the master tell us his secret? The lost sheep on the numberless mountain paths, had made him think of all the disciples led astray by the infinite diversity of schools. He is sad because of all those who have gone astray.' To sum up, science is one and true, but, among the multiple deductions that can be drawn from it, some are erroneous. The master who is in error, leads astray his pupils; disciples who are in error, go astray despite their master.

**U.** Yang Bu, brother of Yang Zhu, went out wearing white, was soaked by the rain, changed, and came back dressed in black. The dog, which had seen him go out dressed in white, barked at him when he came back in black. Angry, Yang Bu was going to beat it. 'Don't beat it,' said Yang Zhu. 'You have changed from white to black. How could he recognise you?' (A moral change in a person, for example from good to bad, breaks his habitual relationships with other beings; he is no longer the same).

**V.** Yang Zhu said: 'Although he may not intend it, he who does good to another, attracts a good reputation; this reputation attracts fortune; and this fortune draws enemies to him. Therefore Sages ask themselves several times, before doing good to another.'

**W.** Once, someone claimed to have the recipe for avoiding death. The Prince of Yen sent a deputy to ask him for it. When the deputy arrived, the man with the recipe had died. The prince blamed the deputy for having gone there too late, and was going to punish him. One of his favourites said to him: 'If this man truly had the

recipe for not dying, he would certainly not have deprived himself of its benefit. Now he is dead. Therefore he did not have the formula. It could not, therefore, have procured immortality for you'... The prince gave up the idea of punishing the deputy. - A certain Qi who also had a great desire to avoid death, was also grieved by the death of this man. A certain Fu mocked him, saying that, since the man was dead, it was unreasonable to regret the loss of his ineffective secret. A certain Hu said that Fu had spoken badly; 'for,' he said, 'it can happen that he who has a secret does not know how to make use of it; just as some others happen to produce a result (by chance or experiment), without having the formula.' - A man of Wei was good at incantations. When he was near to death, he taught his son his formulae. The latter recited the formulae perfectly, but with no effect. He taught them to another, who could recite them with the same effect the father had... 'Since a living soul was able to act effectively with the formulae of a dead soul, I ask myself (says Lie Zi) if the dead would also be able to act effectively with the formulae of the living?' (Life and death, two forms of the same being).

X. For New Year's Day, the people of Han Dan offered pigeons to Jian Zi, who received them with pleasure and paid well for them. One of his guests asked him why. 'So that I can show how good I am by setting them free on New Year's Day,' he said. - The guest said: 'The people catch them, so that you can set them free. Now in catching them, many are killed. If you value their lives, you would do better to forbid people to catch them. You would thereby show, much better, how good you are.' - 'You are right,' said Jian Zi.

Y. Tian of Qi made offerings to his ancestors, and gave a great banquet to a thousand guests, each of whom brought the customary present. One of the guests brought fish and wild geese. On seeing them Tian sighed piously and said: 'Look how well heaven treats men; it not only makes diverse cereals grow; it also causes the birth of fish and birds, for the use of men'... All the guests agreed in a servile chorus. Alone the son of the Bao family, a boy of twelve, came forward and said: 'What you have just said is not quite right. Even heaven and earth are beings like all beings. There are no superior beings, there are no inferior ones. It is a fact that the stronger and more ingenious eat the weaker and less clever ones, but one should not conclude that the latter were made for the use of the former. Man eats the beings he can eat, but heaven did not cause the birth of these beings in order that man should eat them. Otherwise one would have to say that heaven has caused men to be born in order that mosquitoes could bite

them, and tigers and wolves devour them.'

Z. In the Principality of Qi a poor man was always begging in the market-place of the town. Tired by his entreaties, the people stopped giving him anything. Then the poor man went into the service of a veterinary of the princely family Tian, and earned enough to prevent himself dying of starvation. They said to him that to serve a veterinary was a disgrace. He replied: 'To be reduced to begging passes as the worst disgrace. Now, I was a beggar. How can serving a veterinary be a disgrace for me? It is a step up the ladder.' - A man of Song found half of a divided contract on the road, which someone had lost. He folded it painstakingly, carefully noting the way it had been cut, and confided to his neighbour that he was about to come into a fortune. He was wrong in thinking that the way in which he had obtained the first half must also give him the second half. - A man had a dead tree in his garden. His neighbour said to him: 'A dead tree is an ill-omened object.' The man cut the tree down. The neighbour then asked him to let him have the wood. The man then suspected that the neighbour had made him cut down the tree with that in mind, and took offence. He was wrong. The request that followed does not prove that there was a previous intention. - A man had lost his axe, and suspected that his neighbour's son had stolen it. The more he thought about it, the more he believed it. Therefore, to him, the manner, expression, words, in fact everything about this boy, seemed to make him a thief. When he cleared out his manure pit, he found his axe. The next day, when he saw his neighbour's son, he saw him as the most honest boy that ever was. (Auto-suggestion). - When Bai Gong plotted his revenge (in H above), he slipped and fell, and the spike fixed to the handle of his horeshwhip pierced his chin, without his feeling anything. The people of Zheng who knew about this, said: 'If he could not feel that, what would he feel?' He must have been so absorbed in plotting his revenge, that he did not notice his fall, or the wound. (Transport). - A man of Qi was suddenly taken by so great a desire for gold, that he got up in the morning, dressed, went straight to the money-changer's stall in the market, grabbed a gold piece and walked away. The guards caught him and said to him: 'What made you steal in a place so full of people?' - 'I only saw the gold,' he said; 'I did not see the people.' (Transport).

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NAN HUA CHEN JING

OR

THE TREATISE OF THE TRANSCENDENT MASTER  
FROM NAN HUA

Chapter 1. Towards The Ideal.

A,B. If we can believe ancient legends, in the northern ocean lives an immense fish which can take on the form of a bird. When this bird takes off, its wings extend in the sky like clouds. Skimming the waves, it flies south for a distance of three thousand li, then it rises on the wind to a height of ninety thousand li; all in the space of six months\*. - What we see up there, in the blue; are wild horses running there? Is it powdery matter flying about? Are they the breaths\*\* which give birth to beings?... And is the blue Heaven itself, or is it only the colour of far distant infinity, in which Heaven, the personal being of the Annals and the Odes, is hidden?... And from up there, can they see this earth? And under what aspect? Mysteries! - Whatever it is, rising up from the vast ocean, and carried by a great mass of air, the only support capable of bearing its immensity, the great bird glides at a prodigious altitude. - A newly hatched cicada and a very young pigeon saw the great bird, laughed at it, and said: 'What's the good of climbing so high? Why expose oneself like that? We are happy just flying from branch to branch, without leaving the suburbs; when we fall on the ground, we don't hurt ourselves; each day, without getting tired, we find all we need. Why go so far? Why climb so high? Don't anxieties increase in proportion to distance and height?'... Comments of two small beings, on a subject beyond their comprehension. A small mind does not understand what a great mind embraces. A short experience does not extend to distant facts. The mushroom, which only lives for a morning, does not know what a lunar cycle is. The insect, which only lives one summer, knows nothing of the succession of the seasons. Don't ask ephemeral beings for information about the great tortoise that lives for five centuries, or about the great tree whose life cycle is eight thousand years. Even old Peng Zu\*\*\* could tell you nothing about that which exceeds the eight centuries attributed to him by tradition. Each being has a formula for its own development.

\*Allegory analogous to the annual ascent and descent of the dragon. Clouds from the north condensed to rain in the south. Vapours rendered by the south to the north. Annual cycle of two six-monthly periods.

\*\*Breaths of the great breath of nature.

\*\*\*Legends. Peng Zu would have been 767 years old in 1123 B.C.

C. There are men almost as limited as the two small beings mentioned above. Understanding only the routine of ordinary life, they are fit only to be mandarins of a district, or at most, lord of a fief. - Master Rong of Song was superior to this type, and more like the great bird. He lived, equally indifferent to praise and blame. Sticking to his own judgement, he did not allow himself to be influenced by the opinions of others. He never distinguished between glory and disfavour. He was free from the bonds of human prejudice. - Master Lie of Zheng was superior to Master Rong, and still more like the great bird. His soul flew away, on the wing of contemplation, sometimes for fifteen days, leaving his body inert and unconscious. He was almost free from terrestrial links. Not quite, however, for he had to wait for the ecstatic rapture, a remaining dependence. - Let us suppose now a man completely absorbed in the immense cosmic gyration, and moving with it in the infinite. He will no longer depend on anything. He will be perfectly free, in the sense that his person and his action will be united with the person and action of the great Whole. Thus one can say justly: 'The superior man has no longer a self of his own; transcendent man has no action of his own; the Sage has not even a name of his own; for he is one with the great Whole.'

D. In the old days, Yao thought of ceding the empire to his minister Xu You. He said to him: 'When the sun, or the moon, shines, one puts out the torch. When it rains, one puts aside the watering can. The empire prospers through your efforts. Why should I stay on the throne? Take it, please'... 'Thank you,' said Xu You, 'please keep it. The empire has prospered through your reign. What does personal renown matter to me? A branch in the forest suffices as lodging for a bird. A little water drunk at the riverside quenches the thirst of the rat. I have no more needs than these small creatures. Let us stay in our respective places, you and I.' - These two men attained almost the level of Master Rong of Song. The Daoist ideal is more elevated than that. - One day Jian Wu said to Lian Shu: 'I have heard Jie Yu say exaggerated, extravagant things'... 'What did he say?' asked Lian Shu... 'He said that, in the far distant Isle of Gu She, live transcendent men, white as snow, fresh as children, who do not eat any kind of food, but breathe the wind and drink the dew. They walk in space, clouds serve them as chariots, and dragons as mounts. Through the influx of their transcendence, they protect men from illnesses and ensure the ripening of the crops. These are clearly follies. Therefore I did not believe them'... Lian Shu replied: 'The blind do not see, because they have no eyes. The deaf do not hear, because they have no ears. You did not understand Jie Yu because you have no spirit. The superior men of whom he spoke, exist. They possess virtues even greater than those

you have just enumerated. But as for such things as illnesses and crops, they interest themselves so little that, should the empire be falling in ruins and everyone asking them for help, they would not trouble themselves, so indifferent are they to everything... The superior man is touched by nothing. A universal deluge would not submerge him; a universal conflagration would not consume him, so elevated is he above everything\*. From what he casts off, one could make Yaos and Shuns\*\*. Would this man occupy himself therefore, with small things such as harvests or the government of a state?' - Each one represents the ideal to himself in his own way. In Song the ideal is to be well-dressed and to have carefully styled hair; in Yue the ideal is to be close-cropped and covered in tattoos. Emperor Yao went to a great deal of trouble and believed he had reigned ideally. After he had visited the Four Masters in the far distant Isle of Gu She, he realised that he had spoilt everything. The ideal is the indifference of the superior man, who lets the cosmic wheel turn.

E. Common princes do not know how to use men of this expansiveness, who do not excel when charged with small tasks, their genius in those circumstances being restricted. - Master Hui\*\*\*, the sophist, having grown some enormous gourds in his garden, cut them in two so that he could use them as basins. Finding these basins too large, he cut them in half. These quarter-gourds would not stand up alone, and could no longer hold anything. He broke them up... 'You are nothing but a fool,' said Zhuang Zi to him. 'Why couldn't you make something of these rare gourds? You could have made them into buoys for crossing lakes and rivers. By reducing them you have made them useless.' - It is the same for men as for things; it all depends on the use that is made of them. - A family of silkworm rearers from Song possessed the recipe for a cream which prevented the hands of those who separated the cocoons from chapping or cracking. They sold their recipe to a foreigner for a hundred pieces of gold, and considered they had made a good profit. Now the foreigner came to be admiral of the fleet for the King of Wu, and he commanded a naval expedition against Yue. It was winter. Having used his cream to protect the hands of his sailors from chilblains, he won a great victory which procured for him a vast fief. So two uses of the same cream produced a small sum and an immense fortune. - He who knows how to use the superior man will gain much. He who does not know, will gain nothing.

\*Allegorical phrases, which will be taken in their true sense later.

\*\*Blow to the Confucian paragons, who are regarded as inferior beings by the Daoists.

\*\*\*Hui Zi, minister of Liang, sophist, perpetual contradictor of Zhuang Zi, and one of his favourite butts.

F. 'Your theories,' said Master Hui to Master Zhuang, 'have breadth, but no practical value; furthermore, no one wants them. They are like a great *Ailanthus* tree, whose fibrous wood cannot be made into planks, whose knotty branches are good-for-nothing.' - 'All the better for me,' said Master Zhuang. 'For everything which has a practical value perishes with use. The marten has a good thousand ploys, but finally perishes, its fur being sought-after. The yak, so strong, ends by being killed, its tail serving to make standards. Whereas the *Ailanthus*, with which you compare me to my credit, grows on a barren earth, spreading as much as it wants, shading the traveller and the sleeper, without fear of the axe or the delinquent, precisely because, as you say, it is useless. Shouldn't one rejoice at being good-for-nothing?'



## Chapter 2. Universal Harmony.

**A.** Master Qi\* was sitting on a stool, his eyes turned towards the sky, breathing feebly. His soul must have been absent\*\*. - Astonished, the disciple You\*\*\*, who served him, said to himself: 'What is this? Is it possible that a being can remain amongst the living, and yet become insensible as a dried out tree, inert as ashes? This is no longer my master.' - 'Yes,' said Qi, coming back from his ecstasy, 'it is still him. I lost myself\*\*\*\* only for a time. But how can you understand that, when you know only the human harmonies, not the terrestrial, and still less the celestial.' - 'Please help me understand by some comparison,' asked You. - 'So be it,' said Master Qi. 'The great undetermined breath of nature is the wind. In itself the wind has no sound. But when it stirs them, all things become a reed instrument for it. The mountains, woods, rocks, trees, all their rough and twisted parts, resound like so many mouths, softly when the wind is gentle, loudly when the wind is strong. There are roarings, whistlings, rumblings, commands, appeals, claps, cries, and laments. The call answers the call. It is an ensemble, a harmony. Then, when the wind drops, all these sounds cease. Have you not observed that on a stormy day?' - 'I understand,' said You. 'The human harmonies are those of musical instruments made by man. The terrestrial harmonies are those of the voice of nature. But what is celestial harmony?'

**B.** 'It is,' said Master Qi, 'the harmony of all beings in their common nature and becoming. In it there is no contrast, because there is no distinction. Great science embraces. Great words embrace. Science and words of an inferior order distinguish. - All is one. During sleep the non-distracted soul is absorbed in unity; during wakefulness, distracted, it distinguishes diverse beings.' - And what are the causes of these distinctions?... They are caused by activity, relationships, and the conflicts of life. Theories and errors come from these things. The notions of good and bad were derived from shooting competitions; the notions of right and wrong from contracts. (Hitting or missing the target; conformity or non-conformity with the source, says the commentary). People add faith to these imaginary notions; they have even gone so far as to attribute them to heaven. Since then it has been impossible to bring humans back to their true nature. And yet we must affirm that contentment and resentment, pleasure and pain, projects and regrets, passion and reason, indolence and steadfastness, action and laziness; all these contrasts are so many sounds coming from the same instrument, so many mushrooms born of the same humid-

\*Qi, Master of the Southern Suburb, where he lived.

\*\*Commentary: His soul seems to have left his body. Cf. ch. 24 H.

\*\*\*Master Yen You, Yen Cheng, or Yen Nou.

\*\*\*\*Absorbed in universal being, in unity, he loses the notion of distinct beings.

ity, fleeting modalities of the universal being. All this has come about during the course of time. Where did it come from? It was born of itself between a morning and evening, not as a real thing, but just seeming to be so. There are no such things as distinct beings. There is only an 'I' by contrast with a 'he'. He and I are beings only of reason; there does not exist, in reality, this something closer which one calls mine, and this something further away which one calls yours. - But who is the agent of this state of things, the motor of the great Whole?... Everything happens as if there were a true governor, but whose nature cannot be understood. This hypothesis explaining phenomena is acceptable on condition that one does not make this governor a distinct material being\*. It is a tendency without palpable form, the norm inherent in the universe, its immanent evolutive formula. Norms of all kinds, like those which make a body of several organs\*\*, a family of several persons, a state of numerous subjects, are so many participants of the universal governor. These participants neither augment nor diminish it, for they are communicated through it, not separated from it. Beings arise as prolongations of the universal norm. When a being ceases to exist, the norm remains. The norm of a being was before, and remains afterwards, unalterable and indestructible; the rest was only an appearance. - It is from ignorance of this principle that have come all the pains and sorrows of men, the struggle for existence, fear of death, and apprehension of the mysteries beyond. This blindness is almost general, but not, however, universal. There are still men, few in number, who have not been seduced by conventional traditionalism, who recognise no master but their reason, and who, through their meditations on the universe have deduced the doctrine expounded above. These men know that there is nothing real except the universal norm. The common people, unreflecting, believe in the real existence of everything. This modern error has drowned the ancient truth. It is so anchored, so inveterate, that the greatest sages in the eyes of the world, the Great Yu included\*\*\*, have been duped by it. To support the truth, I find myself almost alone.

C. But, if all is one, if everything can be reduced to a universal norm, this norm will include simultaneously truth and error, all the opposites; and if the facts of which men speak are unreal, human speech is therefore only a vain sound, no better than a clacking of hens. - I reply, no, there is no error in the norm, only in limited minds; yes, the distinctions of the disciples of Confucius and Mo Zi are nothing but vain clackings. - There is, in reality,

\*Negation of the Sovereign on High of the Annals and the Odes (as a distinct material being). Compare with Lao Zi, chapter 4 E.

\*\*The human soul is included here.

\*\*\*Blow to a Confucian paragon.

neither truth nor error, yes nor no, nor other distinctions whatsoever, all being one, even the opposites. There are only diverse aspects, which depend on the point of view. From my point of view, I see thus; from another point of view, I would see otherwise. I and other are two different positions, which make one judge and speak differently. Thus one can speak of life and death, possible and impossible, licit and illicit. They debate, some saying yes, others no, errors of subjective understanding due to different points of view. The Sage, on the contrary, begins by clarifying the object with the light of reason. He ascertains, first of all, that this is this and that is that, that all is one. Next he ascertains that there is yes and no, opposition, contrast. He concludes with the reality of unity and the non-reality of diversity. His own point of view is a point from where this and that, yes and no, still seem non-distinguished. This point is the pivot of the norm. It is the motionless centre of a circumference on whose contour run all contingencies, distinctions, and individualities; whence one sees only an infinity which is neither this nor that, yes nor no. To see everything in the as yet undifferentiated primordial unity, or from a distance which makes all fuse into one, is true intelligence. - The sophists are mistaken in trying to get there by positive and negative arguments, or by analysis and synthesis. They will arrive only at ways of subjective viewing, which, added up and forming opinions, pass as principles. Just as a footpath is formed by the footsteps of passers-by, likewise things end up by being qualified according to how much has been said of them. It is thus, one says, because it is thus; this is a principle. Is it truly like that, in reality? Not at all. Envisaged in the norm, a straw and a rafter, beauty and ugliness, all such opposites are one. Prosperity and ruin, successive states, are only phases; all is one. But only great minds are competent to understand this. We do not occupy ourselves in distinguishing, but see all in the unity of the norm. We do not discuss in order to carry people away, but we use, amongst others, the method of the monkey rearer. This man said to the monkeys: 'I will give you three taro roots in the morning and four in the evening.' The monkeys were upset (because they had to wait till evening for the greater share of their pittance). Then he said: 'I will give you four taros in the morning and three in the evening.' The monkeys were all happy. With the advantage of having made them happy, this man gave them only the seven taros a day he had intended for them\*. Thus does the Sage. He says yes or no, for the sake of peace, and remains at the centre of the universal wheel, indifferent to the direction in which it turns.

D. Some ancients thought that in the beginning nothing pre-existed. This is an extreme position. - Others thought that something pre-

\*Cf. Lie Zi, ch. 2 Q.

existed. That is an extreme opposite position. - Others, finally, thought there was something indistinct, non-differentiated. This is the middle position, the true one. - This non-differentiated primordial being is the norm. When one imagines distinctions, one ruins its concept. After distinctions come arts and tastes, impressions and subjective preferences which can neither be defined nor taught. The three musicians Zhao Wen, Kuang Zi, and Hui Zi loved their music since they found it different from and clearly superior to other's. Ah well! They could never define what made the difference and superiority; they could never teach their sons to play like them. For the subjective cannot be defined nor taught. The Sage disdains these vanities, keeping in the half-obscurity of the synthetic vision, content with good practical sense.

E. One may object to my affirming that there are no distinctions, saying: 'We will admit that the distinctions between fairly similar terms are only apparent. But as for absolutely opposed terms, how can one reduce them to simple unity? For example, how can the following be reconciled: Origin of being, being without origin, origin of the being without origin. And these: Being and nothingness, being before nothingness, nothingness before being. These terms exclude one another, don't they?' - I reply: 'They only exclude one another if one looks at them as existing. Before becoming, in the unity of the primordial principle, there is no opposition. Looked at from this angle, a hair is not small, a mountain is not large; an unborn baby is not young, a centenarian is not old. Heaven, earth, and I are of the same age. All beings, and I, are one in the origin. Since all is one objectively, and in reality, why distinguish entities by words, which only express subjective and imaginary concepts. If you start to name and count, you will never stop, the series of subjective views being infinite. - Before time, everything was one, in the Principle, closed like a solid envelope. Then, as language, there was only a general verb. All that which has been added since is subjective and imaginary, such as the difference between right and left, distinctions, oppositions, tasks. So many reasoned things which are designated by words, to which nothing corresponds in reality. Thus the Sage studies everything in the material world, and in the world of ideas, but without pronouncing himself on anything, in order not to add a further subjective view to those which have already been put forward. He keeps quiet and withdrawn, when the common people hold forth, "not for truth, but for show," as the saying goes. - What can one say of universal being, except that it is? Does it affirm something to say that humanity is human, modesty is modest, bravery is brave? Aren't these empty phrases that mean nothing?... If one could distinguish in the Principle, and apply attributes to it, it would not be the universal principle. To know to stop oneself where intelligence and language are in default,

is wisdom. What is the good of looking for impossible terms to express an ineffable being? He who understands that all is one, has conquered the inexhaustible, but also inscrutable, heavenly treasure. He has the comprehensive illumination, which lights the whole without making details appear. - It is this light, superior to that of ten suns, that many years ago Shun extolled to old Yao\*.'

F. 'Everything in the world is personal and subjective,' said Wang Ni to Nie Que. 'A man lying in the mud will get lumbago, whereas an eel could find nowhere better. A man perched up a tree would feel ill at ease, whereas a monkey would find this position perfect. Some eat this, others that. All men chase after the famous beauties Mao Qiang and Li Ji; whereas, on sighting them, fish dive terrified, birds take refuge high in the air, and antelopes flee at a gallop. You do not know what effect a certain thing has on me, and I do not know what impression it produces on you. This question of feelings and tastes, being wholly subjective, is principally insoluble. The only thing is to leave it. Men will never understand this.' - 'Common men, yes,' said Nie Que; 'but the superior man?' - 'The superior man,' said Wang Ni, 'is beyond these trifles. In his high transcendence he is beyond all impression and emotion... In a boiling lake, he does not feel the heat; in a frozen river, he does not feel the cold\*\*. If lightning were to rend the mountains, or a tempest convulse the ocean, he would not be upset. He climbs the clouds, bestrides the sun and the moon, and runs across the universe. What interest can he, for whom life and death are all one\*\*\*, show for small details?'

G. Master Qu Qiao said to Master Qiu of Zhang Wu: 'One affirms that the Sage does not encumber himself with the things of this world; that he does not seek for his own advantage, and does not draw back in front of danger; that he holds on to nothing; that he does not try to make himself agreeable; that he keeps himself away from dust and mud'... 'I will define it better, in fewer words,' said Master Qiu. 'The Sage abstracts from time, and sees all in one. He holds his tongue, keeping his personal impressions to himself, abstaining from dissertations on obscure and insoluble questions. This withdrawal, this concentration, gives him, in the midst of the passionate affairs of common man, an apathetic, almost stupid, look. In reality, interiorly, he concentrates on the highest occupation, the synthesis of all the ages, the vision of all things in unity.'

H. As for the distinction which torments common men, that of

\*Imaginary anecdote. Blow to two Confucian paragons.

\*\*Metaphors which will be taken in their true sense later.

\*\*\*Two alternative phases of existence.

life and death... Is not love of life an illusion? Is not fear of death an error? This departure, is it really a misfortune? Does it not lead, like the bride who leaves the paternal home, to another happiness?... Once, when the beautiful Li Ji was kidnapped, she cried so much that her dress was drenched. When she had become the favourite of the King of Jin she agreed that she had been wrong to cry. Is it not the same for most of the dead? Parted regretfully (from life) a long time ago, don't they now think they were wrong for having loved life?... Could not life be but a dream? Some, awakening from a dream, are upset; others, delivered from a bad dream, are happy. The ones and the others, whilst they were dreaming, believed in the reality of their dream. After waking, they said to themselves that it was only a vain dream. It is the same for the great awakening, death, after which one says of life that it was only a long dream. But, amongst the living, few understand this. Almost all believe themselves to be wide awake. Some believe themselves to be truly kings, others, valets. We all dream, you and I. I who tell you that you dream, I dream my dream also. - The identity of life and death seems unbelievable to most people. Will they ever be persuaded of it? It is unlikely. For, in this case there is no clear demonstration, no decisive authority, and a host of subjective sentiments. The heavenly rule alone can solve this question. And what is this heavenly rule? It is to place oneself, in order to judge, in the infinite... It is impossible otherwise to resolve the conflict of contradictions, to decide which is true and which is false. So we place ourselves outside time, beyond reason. We envisage the question from the infinite, a distance at which all melts into an indeterminate whole.

**I.** All beings belong to the Whole, their actions are not free, but necessitated by its laws... One day Twilight asked Shadow: 'Why do you move in such a way?'... 'I do not move myself,' said Shadow. 'I am projected by anything whatsoever, which produces me and orientates me, following the laws of opacity and movement'... It is the same for all acts.

**J.** There are no real individuals as such, but only prolongations of the norm... 'Once,' relates Zhuang Zi, 'one night, I was a butterfly, flitting about contented with its lot. Then I woke up as Zhuang Zi. Who am I in reality? A butterfly who dreams he is Zhuang Zi, or Zhuang Zi who dreamt he was a butterfly? In my case, are there two individuals? Has there been a real transformation of one individual into another?' - (Neither one nor the other, says the commentary. There have been two unreal modifications of the unique being, the universal norm, in which all beings in all their states are one).

### Chapter 3. Maintenance Of The Living Principle.

**A.** The energy of life is limited. The mind is insatiable. To put a limited instrument at the discretion of an insatiable master is always risky, and often fatal. The master will wear out the instrument. Prolonged, exaggerated intellectual effort uses up life. - To kill oneself doing good for the love of glory or to perish for a crime at the hand of the executioner, comes back to the same thing; death caused through excess, in each case. To last, one must moderate oneself, without going to the extreme in anything, always sticking to the middle way. In this way the body is kept intact, life maintained, parents looked after until their death, and the allotted time lived out.

**B.** The butcher of Prince Hui of Liang was cutting up beef. Effortlessly, methodically, and ably, his knife detached the skin, cut the flesh, and separated the joints. - 'You are truly skilled,' said the prince, as he watched him work. - 'My entire art,' replied the butcher, 'consists in concentrating on the principle of cutting up. When I started, I thought of the beast. After three years' practice, I began to forget the object. Now, when I cut, I have only the principle in mind. My senses no longer act; my will alone is active. Following the natural lines of the animal, my knife penetrates and separates, cutting the soft flesh and following the bones, doing its task naturally, without effort. It does not wear because it does not cut the hard parts. A beginner wears out one knife a month. A mediocre butcher wears out a knife in a year. This same knife has served me for nineteen years. It has cut up several thousand cattle without showing any signs of wear, because I make it go only where it can pass.' - 'Thank you,' said Prince Hui to the butcher, 'you have taught me how one can prolong life, by making it serve only things which do not wear it out.'

**C.** Affliction is another cause of wear on the living principle. Omitting minor troubles, Zhuang Zi points out three serious causes, common in his time of feudal struggles: legal mutilations, exile, and death. - To be resigned to mutilation, like the Prince of Liang's secretary who had a foot cut off, and did not reproach his master for his mutilation, but consoled himself by thinking it was the will of heaven. - To resign oneself to exile, like the swamp pheasant which lives content with its needy and troublesome existence without desiring the comfort of an aviary. - Accepting death, because it is only a change, often for the better. When Lao Dan was dead, Qin Shi went in to mourn him, but only uttered in front of the coffin the three lamentations required of everyone by the rite. When he came out, the disciples said to him: 'Were you not a friend of Lao Dan?'... 'I was,' said Qin Shi... 'Then,'

said the disciples, 'why did you not cry more?'... 'Because,' said Qin Shi, 'this body is no longer my friend. All these mourners who fill up the house, howling louder and louder, are acting from pure sentimentality, in an unreasonable, almost damnable way. The law, forgotten by the common people, but which the Sage remembers, is that each one comes into this world and leaves it at the appointed time. So the Sage does not rejoice at births and is not affected by deaths. The ancients have compared man with a faggot which the Lord ties up (birth) and unties (death)\*. When the flame has consumed a faggot, it passes to another, and is not extinguished\*\*.'

\*Compare with the Hindu Prajapati, master of life and death.

\*\*The commentary says that fire is to the faggot as the soul is to the body; it passes to a new body, as the fire passes to another faggot.



## Chapter 4. The World Of Men.

A. Yen Hui, the favourite disciple, asked his master Confucius for permission to leave... 'To go where?' asked Confucius... 'To Wei,' said the disciple. 'The prince of that country is young and wayward. He governs badly, ignores the comments of others, and puts people to death for small things. His principality is littered with corpses. The people are plunged in despair... Now I have heard you say many times that one should leave a well-ordered country to go and help one which is badly governed. The doctor goes to the sick. I wish to devote what I have learnt from you, to the salvation of the people of Wei.' - 'Don't go,' said Confucius. 'It will be your ruin. The great principle is that one should not encumber oneself with multiple problems. The superior men of antiquity never encumbered themselves with others to the point of troubling themselves. They did not waste time trying to amend a brutal tyrant... Nothing is more dangerous than to speak with insistence on justice and charity to a violent man, who takes pleasure in evil. His counsellors agree with him on these matters and they will unite themselves in order to intimidate you. If you hesitate or weaken, they will triumph and the evil will be worse. If you attack them with force, the tyrant will put you to death. In this way, in the old days, minister Guan Long Feng was put to death by the tyrant Jie, and Prince Bi Gan by the tyrant Zhou. Both of them died for having taken sides with an oppressed people against oppressive princes. In the past, the great Emperors Yao and Yu failed to verbally persuade vassals who were avid for glory and wealth; they had to reduce them by force... Now the present Prince of Wei is a man of the same kind. How will you speak to him, in order to touch him?' - 'I will speak to him,' said Yen Hui, 'with modesty and frankness.' - 'You will waste your time,' said Confucius. 'This man is full of himself. He is, moreover, a consummate knave. Evil is not repugnant to him and virtue has no effect on him. He will either openly contradict you, or he will pretend to listen, but take no notice of what you say.' - 'Then,' said Yen Hui, 'conserving my inner rectitude, I will accommodate myself to him exteriorly. I will expound the heavenly reason to him, which perhaps will touch him, since he is, like me, a son of heaven. Without seeking to please him, I will speak to him with the simplicity of a child, as a disciple of heaven; so respectfully that no one will be able to accuse me of having lacked the slightest respect. I will gently expound to him the doctrine of the ancients. Should this doctrine condemn his conduct, he will not be able to be angry with me, since it is not mine. Don't you think, master, that in this way, I can correct the Prince of Wei?' - 'You will not correct him,' said Confucius. 'That is the didactic procedure, known to all the masters, which does not convert anyone. In speaking

thus, perhaps you will not incur reprisals, but that is all.' - 'Then,' asked Yen Hui, 'how does one convert someone?' - 'By preparing oneself,' said Confucius, 'through abstinence.' - 'Oh,' said Yen Hui, 'I can do that. My family is poor. We spend months without drinking wine and without eating meat.' - 'That,' said Confucius, 'is abstinence in preparation for sacrifices. It is not that, but the abstinence of the heart.' - 'Ah,' said Yen Hui. 'I don't know about that, that is why I am only a Yen Hui. If I knew that I would no longer be Yen Hui; I would have become a superior man. But, in practice, can one empty oneself to this point?' - 'It can be done,' said Confucius, 'and I am going to teach you how. For that, one must allow only things which no longer have a name, abstract ideas, and not concrete things, to enter from outside into the domain of the heart. The heart should only vibrate with their contact, (with objective notions); never spontaneously, (with subjective notions). One must keep oneself closed, simple, naturally pure, without any artificial mixture. One can then keep oneself free from emotion, whereas it is difficult to be calm after allowing oneself to be moved; just as it is easier not to walk than to cover up one's footprints after having walked. All artificiality is false and ineffective. Only the natural is true and effective. To expect an effect from human means, is like wishing to fly without wings or to understand without intelligence... Just as the light coming from outside through a hole in the wall, spreads itself in the space of this apartment dimming peacefully, without forming images; so abstract knowledge must spread itself in peace, without trouble. If knowledge, remaining concrete, creates images or is reflected, a man had best sit still, or his heart will wander foolishly. The empty heart attracts supernatural beings who make it their home. They exercise a very powerful action on the living. Only such a one is the instrument of moral transformations, being a pure parcel of the Principle, the universal transformer. That is how one must explain the influence on men of Yao and Shun, Fu Xi, Ji Jiu, and many others.' (The commentary says that in this paragraph Yen Hui professes Confucianism; Confucius teaches him Daoism).

**B. Another discourse of Confucius on Daoist apathy...** Sent as ambassador by his master the King of Chu to the Prince of Qi, Zi Gao asked Confucius for advice. 'My king,' he said, 'has given me a very important mission. It will be difficult, and I don't know if I shall succeed. I fear for my health and life. It really worries me... I have always lived soberly, with a healthy body and a tranquil heart. Now, since the day of my nomination as ambassador, I have had so much fire in my entrails that in the evening I have to drink iced water to calm this inner burning. If I am like that before starting my mission, what will it be like later? To succeed, I must endure endless worries. And if I don't succeed, how will

I save my life? Master, can you give me some advice?' - 'Yes,' said Confucius. 'Piety towards one's parents and fidelity towards one's prince are two natural fundamental obligations which may never be dispensed with. To obey one's parents and serve one's prince are the obligations of the child, and also, of the minister, in all things, whatever happens. One must therefore, on this question, banish all consideration of pleasure or pain, to see the obligation in itself, not as a facultative thing, but as a fatal thing, to which one should be devoted if necessary as far as the sacrifice of one's life, and the acceptance of death. Put in this way, you must accept your mission and devote yourself to its accomplishment... It is true that the role of an ambassador, of a diplomatic go-between, is a difficult and perilous one. Adding indiscreet, agreeable words to an agreeable message; adding disagreeable, wounding words to a disagreeable message; posing, bragging, exaggerating, or exceeding one's mandate; these are generally the causes of misfortune for ambassadors. Any excess is deadly. Also, it is said, in the Rules of Speaking: "Transmit the meaning of your message, but not the terms, if these are hard. With stronger reason, do not gratuitously add wounding terms." If you act in this way, your life would probably be saved. Generally it is passion which ruins things. Wrestlers begin by wrestling according to the rules; then, when they are carried away, they give each other dirty blows. Drinkers begin by drinking moderately; then, warmed up, they get drunk. The common people start by being polite; then, with familiarity, comes incivility. Many things, at first just right, are exaggerated later. All these things happen because passion is mixed in with them. The same can happen to bearers of messages. If they become heated about their subject, and add words of their own, they will be finished. It is the same with the orator who is moved; like the wind acting on water, whipping up the waves, so the discourse easily becomes inflamed. Nothing is more dangerous than words inflamed by passion. From them, one can end up like a furious beast at bay. They provoke the rupture of negotiations, hatred and vengeance. Thus the Rules of Speaking say: "Do not exceed your mandate. Do not insist too strongly from a desire to succeed. Do not try to obtain more than what you must ask for." Without following that, you will do no good, and put yourself in danger. But, with all passion put aside, do your task with a free heart. Whatever may happen, spur yourself on without cease, by asking yourself: "How can I act in response to the goodness of my prince?" Finally, be ready to make the most difficult sacrifice, that of life itself, if necessary. That is my advice.'

**C. Another lesson on Daoist moderation.** - The philosopher Yen He, of Lu, had been appointed as tutor to the eldest son of Duke Ling

of Wei, and asked advice of Ju Boyu. 'My pupil,' he said, 'is as bad as possible. If I let him do as he wishes, he will ruin his country. If I try to curb him, it may cost me my life. He sees the wrongs of others, but not his own. What can one do with such a disciple?' - Ju Boyu said: 'First of all be circumspect, be correct, do nothing critical. Afterwards you will try to win him over. Accommodate yourself to him, without condescending to act badly with him, of course, but without being too haughty with him. If he has a young character, be young yourself. If he dislikes constraint, do not annoy him. If he does not like domination, do not try to impose anything on him. Above all, do not rub him the wrong way, do not turn him against you... Do not try to struggle against him forcefully. That would be to imitate the stupid mantis that tried to stop a carriage, and was crushed... Only have dealings with him when he is well-disposed. You know how tiger trainers act with their dangerous pupils. They never give them living prey, for the satisfaction of killing increases their brutal cruelty. They do not even give them big pieces of meat, for the act of tearing them would excite their bloody instincts. They give them their food in small portions and only approach them when, rested and calm, they have as much good humour as possible for a tiger. In this way they have more chance of not being devoured... However, do not make your disciple untreatable by spoiling him. Certain crazy horse breeders love their animals so much that they even conserve their excrement. What happens then? It happens that, having become capricious to the point of frenzy, these horses become carried away and break everything, even when one approaches them gently and with the best intentions. The more one spoils them, the less grateful they become'... *(The Daoist principles for the management of men and affairs expounded above, come back to this: Treat everything from afar and above, generally, and not in detail, without applying oneself too much, and without preoccupation. Act with prudence, condescension, patience; let things go to some extent, but without slackness. If necessary, face death, which the Daoist does not fear. - For the rest, be devoted to abstention and retreat, which the Daoists always put above action, because inaction conserves, whereas action wears one out).*

D. The master carpenter Shi, travelling in the land of Qi, passed near the famous oak which shaded the mound of the earth genie at Qu Yuan. The trunk of this famous tree could hold a cow. It rose straight to a height of eighty feet, then spread out a dozen main branches, in each of which one could have dug out a canoe. People came in crowds to admire it. - The carpenter came close by without casting a glance at it. - 'But look,' said his apprentice. 'Since I have wielded an axe, I have never seen such a beautiful

piece of wood, and you don't even look at it.' - 'I have seen it,' said the master. 'It is unsuitable for making a boat, a coffin, a piece of furniture, a door, or a column. Its wood is of no practical use. It will live a long time.' - When master carpenter Shi returned to Qi, he spent the night at Qu Yuan. The tree appeared to him in a dream and said: 'Yes, trees which have good wood are cut down young. In the case of fruit trees, people break their branches in their ardour to ravish them of their fruits. Their utility is fatal to all of them. Therefore I am happy to be useless. It is the same for you men as it is for us. If you are useful, you will not reach old age.' - The next morning the apprentice asked the master: 'If this great tree is content to be useless, why has it allowed itself to be made the genie of the place?' - 'They put it there,' said the master, 'without asking its opinion, and it laughs at that. It is not popular veneration which protects its existence, but its incapacity for ordinary use. Its tutelary action, moreover, amounts to doing nothing.' (Such is the Daoist Sage, put in place despite himself, and keeping himself from acting).

E. (Another variation on the same theme, almost identical, and therefore not translated).

F. In the land of Song, at Jing Shi, the trees grow thick. The very small ones are cut down to make into monkey cages, the medium for making houses for the living, the big ones for coffins for the dead. They all perish by the axe, before their time, because they can be used. If they were useless, they would grow old easily. The Treatise on Victims declares that white headed cattle, pigs with turned-up snouts, and men with fistulas, cannot be sacrificed to the Genie of the River; for these things are said to be ill-omened. Transcendent men think this is lucky for them, since it saves their lives.

G. The legless cripple Shu, a real monster, earned his living and kept a family of ten, by mending, basket making, and so on. When his country mobilized, he remained in peace. On the days of statutory labour they asked nothing of him. When there was distribution in aid of the poor, he received grain and wood. His incapacity for ordinary offices allowed him to live till the end of his days. In the same way, transcendent man's incapacity for ordinary duties, allows him to live his allotted time.

H. When Confucius visited the land of Chu, the fool Jie Yu\* shouted at him: 'Phoenix! Phoenix! There is no doubt that the world is decadent; but what can you do about it? The future has

\*A Daoist Sage, who passed as a fool.

not yet come, the past is already far away. In times of good order, the Sage works for the state. In times of disorder, he concentrates on his own salvation. Now the times are such that escaping death is difficult. There is no longer any happiness; evil crushes everyone. This is not the time to show yourself. You speak in vain of virtue, and you will lose control of yourself. It pleases me to run about like a fool; don't get in my way. It pleases me to walk sideways; don't get under my feet. It is the time for letting things happen.'

**I.** In producing forests, the mountain attracts those who strip it. The fat dripping from the roast fuels the fire which cooks it. The cinnamon tree is cut down because its bark is a sought-after condiment. The varnish tree is cut into and ravished of its precious sap. Almost all men imagine that to be judged competent at something is a good thing. In reality, it is to be judged inept for everything which is an advantage.

Chapter 5. Perfect Action.

A. In the Principality of Lu, a certain Wang Tai, whose feet had been cut off (a common punishment at that time), had more disciples than Confucius. Chang Ji was astonished by this, and said to his master: 'This Wang Tai neither gives lectures nor holds discussions, and yet, those who go to him empty return home full. Is there a method of teaching without words, an impalpable process for forming hearts? Where does this man's influence come from?' - 'From his transcendence,' replied Confucius. 'I came to know him too late. I should have put myself in his school. Everyone should take him as their master.' - 'In what, exactly, is he superior to you?' asked Chang Ji. - 'In the fact,' replied Confucius, 'that he has reached perfect impassivity. Life and death being equally indifferent to him, the collapse of the universe would not cause him any emotion. By force of scrutiny, he has come to the abstract immobile truth, knowledge of the unique universal Principle. He lets all beings evolve according to their destinies\*.' - Confucius continued: 'There are two ways of looking at beings; either as distinct entities, or as being all one in the great Whole. For those who have attained this last point of view, it matters little what their senses perceive. Their spirit glides, all its action being concentrated. In this abstract comprehensive view, details of deficits disappear. This is what makes the transcendence of Wang Tai, which the mutilation of his body could not diminish.' - 'Ah,' said Chang Ji, 'I understand. His reflections have made him the master of his senses, and he has thus reached impassivity. But is there, in all that, any reason for running after him?' - 'Yes,' continued Confucius; 'mental fixation draws those who search for wisdom, just as still water draws those who wish to mirror themselves. No one looks for their reflection in running water. No one learns from an unstable mind. It is immutability that characterizes the Sage in the midst of the crowd, just as the pines and cypresses remain green amongst the trees. In the same way, amongst common men, Emperor Shun remained straight, rectifying the others..... The exterior sign of this interior state is imperturbability. Not that of the brave man, who charges alone for the love of glory into an army ranged for battle; but that of the spirit which, superior to heaven, earth, and all beings, inhabits a body to which it is not attached, making no special case of the images furnished by its senses, knowing all through total knowledge in its motionless unity. This spirit, absolutely independent, is the master of men. If it should please him to summon the people together, all would run there on the appointed day. But he does not wish to make use of this power.'

\*Compare with chapter 2 C.

B. Shentu Jia had also had his feet cut off, for a real, or an alleged fault. In the Principality of Zheng he followed, with Zi Chan, the lessons of Bo Hun Wu Ren. Zi Chan scoffed at this cripple, demanding precedence... 'There are no ranks in our master's school,' said Shentu Jia. 'If you hold to etiquette, go elsewhere. Dust does not stick to a perfectly clear mirror; if any does stick it is because the mirror is damp or greasy. Your demand in a ritual matter shows that you are not yet without faults.' - 'You, a cripple,' said Zi Chan, 'give me the impression of trying to pose as a Yao. If you examine yourself, perhaps you will find reasons for silence.' - 'You refer,' said Shentu Jia, 'to the punishment that I have suffered, and think that I have merited it for some grave fault. Most of those who are in my situation say quite indignantly that it should not have happened to them. Wiser than they, I say nothing, and resign myself in peace to my destiny. Whoever passed within the visual field of Yi, the famous archer, could have been pierced by an arrow; if it did not happen, it was because destiny did not wish it. Destiny willed that I lose my feet and that others keep theirs. Men who have their feet mock me, because I have lost mine. In the past this affected me. Now I have overcome this weakness. I have now studied nineteen years under our master, who, most attentive to my interior, has never once commented on my exterior. You, his disciple, do quite the opposite. Are you not wrong?' - Zi Chan sensed the reprimand, changed his expression, and said: 'I will never mention this again.' (According to the commentary, Zi Chan, here shown badly, is a Confucian paragon. As Prince of Zheng, in the sixth century B.C., he was famous, especially as an administrator. Confucius wept freely when he died).

C. In the Principality of Lu, a certain Shu Shan, whose toes had been cut off, asked Confucius to instruct him. - 'What's the good,' he said, 'since you have not been able to keep your bodily integrity.' - 'I would like, in order to compensate for this loss, to learn how to preserve my mental integrity,' said Shu Shan. 'Heaven and earth lavish themselves on all beings, without discrimination, and I thought that you resembled them. I will not wait to be rebuffed by you further.' - 'Excuse my incivility, please come in,' said Confucius; 'I will tell you what I know.' - After the interview, when Shu Shan had gone away, Confucius said to his disciples: 'This example should make you act for the better, my children. Here we have this cripple seeking to make amends for his past mistakes. Do not make mistakes yourselves.' - However Shu Shan was not satisfied with Confucius, and went to speak with Lao Dan. 'This Confucius,' he said, 'is not a superior man. He actively attracts disciples to himself, poses as a master, and openly seeks a reputation. Now the superior man considers preoccupations as handcuffs



and fetters.' - 'Why,' said Lao Dan, 'did you not profit from your interview by telling him that life and death are one and the same thing, that there is no distinction between yes and no? Perhaps you could have delivered him from his handcuffs and fetters.' - 'Impossible,' said Shu Shan; 'this man is too full of himself. Heaven has punished him by blinding him. No one will make him see more clearly.'

D. Duke Ai of Lu said to Confucius: 'In the land of Wei lived a man called Tuo the Ugly. He was in fact ugliness itself, a real scarecrow, and yet his wives, his fellow citizens, all those who knew him, were very fond of him. Why? Not because of his genius, because he had the same opinions as the others. Nor his nobility, for he was a commoner. Nor his wealth, for he was poor. Nor his knowledge, for all he knew of the world was his village... I wanted to meet him. Certainly he was fearsomely ugly. Despite that, he charmed me, as he charmed everyone. After several months I became his friend. Before the end of a year he had my total confidence. I asked him to be my minister. He accepted with repugnance, and soon left me. I could not console myself for having lost him. To what should one attribute the fascination exercised by this man?' - 'Once,' said Confucius, 'in the land of Chu, I saw the following scene: A sow had just died; its young ones were still sucking at its teats. Suddenly they disbanded, afraid. They had perceived that their mother no longer looked at them, that she was no longer their mother. What they had loved in her from filial love was not her body but that which animated it... In the body of Tuo the Ugly lived a perfect latent virtue. It was this virtue that attracted people to him, despite the repugnant form of his body.' - 'And what,' asked Duke Ai, 'is perfect virtue?' - Confucius replied: 'It is affable impassivity. Life and death, prosperity and decadence, success and failure, wealth and poverty, superiority and inferiority, praise and blame, hunger and thirst, heat and cold, are the alternative vicissitudes from which destiny is made. They succeed one another unpredictably and without known cause. One must neglect these things and not let them penetrate the palace of the mind, lest they trouble its calm peace. To conserve this peace in a stable manner, without allowing it to be troubled even by joy, to look well on all, to accommodate oneself to all; that,' said Confucius, 'is perfect virtue.' - 'Why,' asked Duke Ai, 'do you call it latent?' - 'Because,' said Confucius, 'it is impalpable, like the calm which attracts one to the water of a lake. Thus the calm peace of this character, in no other way definable, attracts everyone to him.' - A few days later, Duke Ai, converted to Daoism by Confucius, confided to Min Zi the impression this conversation had made on him. 'Until now,' he said, 'I believed that to govern, control the statistics, and protect the

lives of my subjects, was my stately duty. But since I have heard the words of a superior man (Confucius), I really believe I was wrong. I have achieved nothing for myself through being too agitated, and nothing for my principality through being too pre-occupied with it. Already Confucius is no longer my subject, but my friend, because of the service he has rendered me in opening my eyes.'

E. A legless cripple won the confidence of Duke Ling of Wei so much that the latter came to prefer him to better-made men. Another, afflicted with an enormous goitre, was the favourite counsellor of Duke Huan of Qi. The glory of a superior capacity eclipses the corporeal forms to which it adheres. Placing importance on bodies and not on virtue is the worst of errors. - Keeping himself in his field of universal knowledge, the Sage disregards knowledge of details, all convention, affection, and art. Free from these artificial and distracting things, he nourishes his being with celestial food (pure reason, says the commentary), and he is indifferent to human affairs. In the body of a man, he is no longer a man. He lives with men, but absolutely indifferent to their praise or blame, because he no longer has their sentiments. That by which he is still a man (his body) is infinitely small; that by which he is one with heaven (his reason) is infinitely great.

F. Hui Zi (a musician and sophist) objected: 'A man cannot come to be without affection, as you say he can.' - 'Yes he can,' replied Zhuang Zi. - 'Then,' said Hui Zi, 'he is no longer a man.' - 'He is still a man,' said Zhuang Zi; 'because the Principle and heaven have given him what makes a man.' - 'If he has lost sentiment,' rejoined Hui Zi, 'he has ceased to be a man.' - 'If he had lost it even as far as its strength, perhaps,' said Zhuang Zi, (because its strength is confounded with nature), 'but it is not like that. The strength remains with him but he does not use it for distinguishing, taking sides, or loving and hating, and in consequence he does not use his body in vain, a body which the Principle and heaven have given him. This is not your case. You kill yourself making music and inventing sophisms.'

**Chapter 6. The Principle, First Master.**

**A.** Understanding the part played by heaven and man, is the highest science. - Knowing what is received from heaven and what one should add oneself, is the highest understanding. - The gift of heaven is one's nature received at birth. The role of man is to seek, starting from what he knows, and learn what he does not know; to maintain his life until the end of the years assigned to it by heaven, without shortening it through his own fault. Knowing this, is the height of knowledge. - And what are the criteria of these assertions, whose truth is not evident? This certainty of the distinction between heavenly and human in man is based on the teachings of the True Men. From them comes True Knowledge.

**B.** Who were these True Men? The True Men of antiquity accepted advice even from minorities. They did not seek for glory, military or political. Failure did not sadden them, success did not inflate them. No height gave them vertigo. They were not drowned by water, nor burnt by fire, because they were elevated to the sublime regions of the Principle\*. The ancient True Men were not troubled by dreams during their sleep, nor by sadness when awake. Refined or subtle-flavoured foods were unknown to them. Their calm and deep breathing penetrated their organism down to their toes, whereas common people breathe only in their throat, as is demonstrated by the glottal spasms of those who argue. The more a man is impassioned, the more superficial is his respiration\*\*. - The ancient True Men ignored love of life and horror of death. Their entrance on the scene of life, caused them no joy; their return behind the scenes at death, caused them no horror. Calmly they came, calmly they went, without jerking, as though they were gliding. Remembering only their last beginning (birth), they were not preoccupied with their next end (death). They loved this life as long as it lasted, and forgot it with the departure for another life, at death. Thus their human sentiments did not contradict the Principle in them; the human in them did not hinder the heavenly. Such were the True Men. In consequence their heart was closed, their attitude was withdrawn, their expression was simple, their conduct was tempered, and their feelings were controlled. They did, on every occasion, what was necessary, without confiding their inner motives to anyone. They made war without hate, and did good without loving. He is not a Sage, who likes to communicate, who makes friends, who calculates times and circumstances,

\*They were one, in the Principle, with the natural forces. He who is one with the Principle, is one with water, fire, etc., and is unharmed by them.

\*\*Illusions, passions, tastes, are all contrary to the truth. For the Daoists, pure air is the food par excellence of the vital force.

who is not indifferent to success and failure, and who shows himself off for glory or favour. Hu Bu Xie, Wu Guang, Bo Yi, Shu Qi, Ji Zi, Xu Yu, Ji Tuo, and Shen Tu Di served everyone and did good to all without any emotion of their heart debasing their acts of goodness. - The ancient True Men were always equitable, never lovable; always modest, never flatterers. They kept to their own way, but without being hard. Their disregard for all was clear, but not affected. Their exterior was peacefully joyful. All their acts seemed natural and spontaneous. They inspired affection by their manners, and respect by their virtue. Under an air of apparent condescension, they kept themselves clearly apart from the common people. They were fond of seclusion; they never prepared their discourses. - For them, punishments were the essential in government, but they applied them without anger. They kept to the rites as an accessory, and performed them so far as it was necessary, in order not to shock the common people. Their science was to allow the times to act, and their virtue was to follow the stream. Those who judge they moved themselves actively, are wrong. In reality they let themselves follow the times and events. For them, to love and hate was all one; or rather, they neither loved nor hated. They considered all as essentially one, in the manner of heaven, and only artificially distinguished individual human cases. Thus they experienced no conflict between the heavenly and human. And that, justly, is what makes a True Man.

C. The alternation of life and death is predetermined by heaven, like that of day and night. If a man submits himself stoically to fate, then nothing can happen against his will. If something happens which wounds him, it is because he has conceived affection for some being. Should he love nothing, then he would be invulnerable. There are sentiments more elevated than the loves which are reputed to be noble. Thus, instead of loving heaven as a father he venerates it as a universal fact, and in place of loving his prince, even as far as dying for him, he sacrifices himself for the sole abstract notion of absolute devotion. When the streams dry up, the fish come together seeking to keep themselves moist by pressing against each other; and men admire this mutual charity! Would it not have been better if, earlier, they had each sought salvation in the deeper waters?... Instead of always citing as examples the goodness of Yao and the malice of Jie, would men not be better off forgetting these two persons and orientating their morality towards the abstract perfection of the Principle? - My body makes up a part of the great mass (of the cosmos, of nature, of the Whole). In it lies the sustenance of my childhood, the activity of my maturity, peace in my old age, and rest in my death. It has been good to me during my life and it will be good to me during the state of death. From any particular place, an object put there may

be stolen; but an object entrusted to the Whole itself cannot be taken away. Identify yourself with the great mass; in it there is permanence. A permanence which is not motionless. There is a chain of transformations, with the Self persisting through mutations without end. This time I am happy to be in a human form\*. I have already experienced in the past, and will experience in the future, the same contentment of being in an unlimited succession of diverse forms. Then why should I hate death, the beginning of my next contentment? The Sage devotes himself to everything in which he takes part, which contains him, and in which he evolves. Abandoning himself to the thread of this evolution, he smiles at premature death, at excess old age, at the beginning, and at the end. He smiles, and wishes one to smile, at all the vicissitudes of life. For he knows that all beings are part of the whole which evolves.

D. Now this Whole is the Principle, will, reality, non-acting, non-apparent. It can be transmitted but not grasped, apprehended but not seen. It has its essence and its root in itself. It existed, immutable, before heaven and earth were formed. It is the source of the transcendence of the heavenly beings and the Sovereign of the Annals and the Odes. It was, before formless matter, before space, before the world, before time; without one being able to call it high, profound, durable, ancient (since the absolute does not admit of relative epithets). Xi Wei knew it, and derived from this knowledge the astronomical laws. Fu Xi knew it, and took from this knowledge the physical laws. The bear (the pole-star) owes its imperturbable fixity to it. The sun and moon owe their regular courses to it. Through it Kan Pi established himself on the Kun Lun Mountains, Ping Yi followed the course of the Yellow River, Jian Wu established himself on Mount Tai, the Yellow Emperor ascended to heaven, Zhuan Xu lived in the azure palace, Yu Qiang became the Genie of the North Pole, Xi Wang Mu was established at Shao Guang\*\*. No one knows anything of its beginning or its end. Through it Peng Zu lived from the time of Emperor Shun until the time of the five hegemonies. Through it Fu Yue governed the empire of his master, Emperor Wu Ding, and became, after his death, a star (in the constellation of Sagittarius).

E. Master Kui, also known as Nan Bo, asked Nu Yu: 'How is it that, despite your great age, you have the freshness of a child?' - 'Because,' said Nu Yu, 'I have lived in conformity with the doctrine of the Principle, and have not worn myself.' - 'Could I learn this doctrine?' asked Master Kui. - 'You do not have the

\*To be a man now, is an episode in the chain of ten thousand successive transformations.

\*\*Reminiscences or fiction? Nothing can be drawn from the commentaries.

ability,' replied Nu Yu. 'Bu Liang Yi had the requisite disposition. I taught it to him. After three days he had forgotten the outside world. Seven days more and he had lost the notion of the objects which surrounded him. Nine days more and he had lost the notion of his own existence. He then acquired clear penetration, and through it the science of momentary existence in the uninterrupted chain. Having acquired this knowledge he ceased to distinguish the past from the present and the future, and life from death\*. He understood that in reality, killing did not cause death, engendering did not cause birth, the Principle sustaining the being across its endings and becomings. It is therefore justly called the permanent fixer. It is from it, the fixed, that all mutations come.' - 'Did you invent this doctrine?' asked Master Kui. 'No,' said Nu Yu, 'I learnt it from the son of Fu Mei, disciple of Lao Song's little son, disciple of Zhan Ming, disciple of Nie Xu, disciple of Su Yi, disciple of Yu Nou, disciple of Huan Ming, disciple of San Liao, disciple of Yi Shi.' (The commentary says: Are these the names of men? It is possible, but unlikely. These words can be interpreted as meanings: 'I have not drawn this doctrine from my imagination. I have discovered it, by meditating on the mystery of the origin').

F. Zi Si, Zi Yu, Zi Li, and Zi Lai were talking. One of them said: 'I will take as my friend he who thinks as I do that all beings are eternal, and life and death succeed one another as two phases of the same being'... Now the three others thought the same, and all four men laughed and became close friends. - Now it happened that Zi Yu fell seriously ill. He was horribly humpbacked and deformed. Zi Si went to visit him. Breathing painfully but with a calm heart, the dying man said to him: 'If, when I have left this form, my left arm is made into a cock, I will sing to announce the dawn. If it is made into a bolt for a cross-bow, I will knock down the crows. If my trunk is made into a carriage harnessed to my spirit transformed into a horse, I will still be satisfied. Each being receives its form in its time, and leaves it at the appointed time. That being so, why conceive of joy or sadness in these vicissitudes? There is no place for it. As the ancients said: "The faggot is successively bound and unbound\*\*." The being does not bind or unbind itself. It depends on heaven for life and death. Why should I, a being among beings, complain about dying?' - Next, Zi Lai fell ill. He was gasping for breath and close to death. His wife and children surrounded him crying. Zi Li went to visit him and said to them: 'Shut up! Get out! Don't trouble his passing' (which requires calm, just as going to sleep does)... Then, leaning against the doorpost, he said to the patient: 'Transformation is good. What is it going to make of you? Where are you going? Will you become an

\*Phases, periods, of one and the same evolution.

\*\*Compare with chapter 3C.

organ of a rat, or the foot of an insect?'... 'It matters little to me,' said the dying man. 'The child must go in whatever direction his parents send him. Now the yin and the yang are more to a man than his parents\*. When their revolution brings about my death, if I do not submit myself willingly, I will be a rebel... The great mass (the cosmos) has served me for my living, consoled me in my old age, and gives me peace in death. It has been good to me in life, and it will be so in death... Let us imagine a smelter melting his metal. If a bit of this metal, jumping up in the melting pot, said: "I want to become a sword, no other thing;" the smelter would certainly find this metal unsuitable. Likewise if, at the time of his transformation, a dying man cried out: "I want to become a man again, no other thing;" it is quite certain that the transformer would find him unsuitable. Heaven and earth (the cosmos) are the great furnace, transformation is the great smelter; whatever it should make of us should be agreeable to us. Let us abandon ourselves to it in peace. Life terminates in a sleep, which is followed by a new awakening.'

G. Master Sang Hu, Meng Zi Fan, and Master Qin Zhang were friends. One of them said: 'Who is perfectly indifferent to any influence, to any action? Who can elevate himself to the heavens by abstraction, saunter on the clouds by speculation, play in the ether, and forget the present life and the death to come?'... The three men looked at each other and laughed, for they were all like that, and they became better friends than ever. When one of the three, Master Sang Hu, died, Confucius sent his disciple Zi Gong to the dead man's house to ask if assistance was needed for the funeral. When Zi Gong arrived, the two surviving friends were singing the following refrain, in front of the corpse, to the accompaniment of a lute: 'O Sang Hu! O Sang Hu!... There you are united with transcendence, whereas we are still men, alas'... Zi Gong went up to them and said: 'Is it in conformity with the rites to sing like that in the presence of a corpse?'... The two men looked at each other and burst out laughing, saying: 'What can this chap understand of our rites?' - Zi Gong went back to tell Confucius of what he had seen, and to ask him: 'What kind of men are these, with neither manners nor bearing, who sing in front of a corpse without trace of sadness? I understand nothing of this.' - 'These people,' said Confucius, 'move outside the world. There can be nothing in common between them and me. I was wrong to send you there. According to them, man should live in communion with the author of beings (the cosmic Principle), by placing himself at the time when heaven and earth were not yet separated. For them, the form

\*The yin and yang, as superior agents of the Principle, give life or death, whereas parents, inferior agents, bring about life only.

that they have in this existence is an accessory, an appendage, of which death delivers them, whilst waiting to be reborn in another. In consequence, for them, there is neither life nor death, past nor future, in the usual meaning of these words. According to them the matter of their bodies has served, and will successively serve, a number of different beings. Their viscera and organs are of little importance to people who believe in a continual succession of beginnings and endings. They walk in spirit outside this dusty world, and abstain from mixing in its affairs. Why should they give themselves the trouble of accomplishing the common rites, or even the appearance of accomplishing them?' - 'But you, Master,' asked Zi Gong won over to Daoism, 'why do you make these rites the basis of your morality?' - 'Because heaven has condemned me to this irksome task,' said Confucius. 'I speak thus, but in fact, like you, I no longer believe in it. Fish are born in the water, men in the Principle. The true superior man is he who has broken with all the rest, in order to adhere uniquely to heaven. He alone should be called a Sage by men. Too often those who are called Sages are only common men in the eyes of heaven.'

H. Yen Hui asked Confucius: 'At his mother's funeral Mengsun Cai made only the customary lamentations without shedding a tear, and he performed all the ceremonies without the least sorrow. Nevertheless, in the land of Lu he passed as having satisfied filial piety. I understand nothing of this.' - 'He satisfied it effectually,' replied Confucius. 'Enlightened as he is, he could not abstain from the exterior ceremonies; that would have shocked the common people too much; but he abstained from their inner feelings, which he does not share. For him, the states of life and death are one, and he recognizes neither before nor after, for he sees them as links in an infinite chain. He believes that beings are subject through fate to successive transformations, to which they have only to submit in peace, without being preoccupied by them. Immersed in the current of these transformations the being has only a confused knowledge of what happens to it. All life is as a dream. You and I who are talking at this time, we are two unawakened dreamers... Therefore death was nothing but a change of form for Mengsun Cai, not worth saddening oneself for, no more than leaving a dwelling one has only lived in for a single day. Thinking like this, he restricts himself to the exterior rites. In this way he shocks neither the public nor his own convictions. - No one knows exactly the intimate nature of his own self. The same man who dreams he is a bird gliding in the sky, dreams later that he is a fish gliding in the depths. He cannot be certain if he says what he says awake or asleep. Nothing of what happens is worth moving oneself for. Peace consists in waiting, submissive to the dispositions of the Principle. When it departs from the present life, the being enters again into the current



of transformations. This is the meaning of the formula "to enter into union with the heavenly infinite." (With heaven, nature, the Principle, adds the commentary).

I. When Yi Er Zi visited Xu You\*, the latter asked him what Emperor Yao had taught him. 'He told me,' said Yi Er Zi, 'to cultivate goodness and fairness, to clearly distinguish good from bad.' - 'Then,' said Xu You, 'why have you come to me now? Since Yao has imbued you with his principles piled one on top of the other, you are no longer capable of being elevated to the higher ideas.' - 'That is, however, my desire,' said Yi Er Zi. - 'An unrealizable idea,' said Xu You. 'A man whose eyes have been torn out can learn nothing about colours.' - Yi Er Zi said: 'You have reformed others who were deformed; why can you not also succeed in reforming me?' - 'There is little hope,' said Xu You. 'However, here is the summary of my doctrine: O Principle, giver to all beings of that which suits them, without claiming to be equitable; producer of good works that extend to all time, without claiming to be charitable; existing before the origin, and not claiming to be venerable; enveloper and supporter of the universe, without claiming to be capable; it is in you that I move.'

J. Yen Hui, the cherished disciple, said to his master Confucius: 'I advance'... 'How do you know?' asked Confucius... 'I lose the notion of goodness and fairness,' replied Yen Hui... 'That is good,' said Confucius, 'but it is not all'... Another time Yen Hui said to Confucius: 'I profit'... 'How do you recognize it?' asked Confucius... 'I forget rites and music,' said Yen Hui... 'That is good,' said Confucius, 'but it is not all'... Another time Yen Hui said to Confucius: 'I progress'... 'What sign have you of it?' asked Confucius... 'Now,' said Yen Hui, 'when I sit down to meditate, I forget absolutely everything\*\*.' - Greatly moved, Confucius asked: 'What does that mean?' - Yen Hui replied: 'Casting off my body, obliterating my intelligence, leaving all forms, driving away all knowledge, I unite myself with the one who penetrates all. That is what I mean by sitting and forgetting everything.' - Confucius said: 'This is union, in which desire ceases; it is the transformation in which the individuality is lost. You have reached true wisdom. Be my master from now on.'

K. Zi Yu and Zi Sang were friends. Once, when it had rained for ten consecutive days, Zi Yu made up a food parcel to take to

\*Compare with chapter 1 D.

\*\*Yen Hui is delivered from what essentially constitutes Confucianism; goodness, fairness, rites and music; he has reached Daoist contemplation, and Confucius is obliged to approve of it.

Zi Sang, who was very poor, and would be without provisions. As he approached his door he heard his voice, half singing, half crying, which said to the accompaniment of the lute: 'O father! O mother! O heaven! O humanity!...' The voice was weakened and the song staccato. When Zi Yu went in he found Zi Sang dying of starvation. 'What are you singing there,' he asked him. - 'I thought,' said Zi Sang, 'of the possible causes of my extreme distress. It certainly did not come from the will of my father and mother, no more than it came from heaven and earth which cover and sustain all beings. There was no logical cause for my misery; thus it was my destiny\*.'

\*This is the last cry; blind acquiescence to the turning of the universal wheel, which always prevails; Daoist fatalism.

## Chapter 7. The Government Of Princes.

A. Nie Que put four questions to Wang Ni, who could not reply. Jumping for joy, Nie Que informed Pu Yi Zi of his triumph. - 'Are you really superior to him?' said Pu Yi Zi. - 'Emperor Shun was not as good as the ancient sovereign Tai Shi. Shun was infatuated by the virtues he believed he possessed, and always criticized others. Old Tai Shi was not so malicious. He slept peacefully and awoke without worries. He did not consider himself worth more than a horse or a cow. Simple and peaceful, he criticized no one. You are more like Shun.'

B. Jian Wu went to see the fool Jie Yu\* who asked him: 'What did you learn from Ren Zhong Shi?' - 'I learnt,' said Jian Wu, 'that when princes make laws, and oblige people to obey them, all goes well.' - 'All appears to go well,' said Jie Yu, 'but it is a false appearance, the exterior alone being ruled, and not the interior. To seek to govern by this process... is of as much value as trying to cross the sea by a ford, keeping the Yellow River in its bed, or making a mosquito carry off a mountain, all things absolutely impossible. The Sage does not rule the exterior, he gives an example of rectitude, which men will follow, if it pleases them. He is too prudent to do more, like the bird which flies high to avoid the arrow, or the rat which digs so deep that it can neither be smoked, nor dug, out. Legislation is useless and dangerous.'

C. When Tian Gen wandered towards the River Liao, south of Mount Yin, he met Wu Ming Ren and asked him straight out: 'What should one do to govern the empire?' - Wu Ming Ren said to him: 'You have been badly taught if you question in such a manner. Moreover, why should I worry myself about the government of the empire, when I, disgusted with the world, live in contemplation of the Principle, walk in space like the birds, and rise up as far as the emptiness beyond space.' - Tian Gen insisted. - Then Wu Ming Ren said to him: 'Stick to simplicity, hold yourself in the void, let all things go, desire nothing for yourself, and the empire will be well governed, for everything will follow its natural course.'

D. Yang Zi Ju went to see Lao Dan, and asked him: 'Would an intelligent, courageous, zealous man be the equal of the Sage Kings of antiquity?' - 'No,' said Lao Dan. 'His kind would be like that of the lower officials, overwhelmed with work and eaten away by worries. His qualities would cause his ruin. The tiger and leopard are killed because their skin is beautiful. Monkeys and dogs are reduced to slavery because they are useful.' - Disconcerted, Yang Zi Ju asked: 'But then, what was it that made the Sage Kings?'

\*Compare with chapter 4 H.

'The Sage Kings,' said Lao Dan, 'covered the empire with their good works, without making it known that they were the authors of them. They did good to all beings, not through detectable actions, but through an imperceptible influence. Being unknown, they made everyone happy. They held themselves on the abyss and walked in nothingness;' (that is to say, they did nothing determinate, but allowed universal evolution to act).

E. At Zheng there was a transcendent sorcerer called Ji Xian\*. This man knew everything about the life and death, prosperity and misfortune of individuals, even so far as predicting the precise day of death, as exactly as if done by a genie. So the people of Zheng, who could not bear to know these things so long in advance, fled as far as possible when they saw him coming. - Lie Zi went to see him and was fascinated. On his return he said to his master, Hu Zi: 'Until now I have taken your teaching as the most perfect, but now I have found better.' - 'Are you quite sure of this?' said Hu Zi; 'considering that you have only received my exoteric teaching, and not yet the esoteric, which is the fecund germ of it, the principle of life. Your knowledge is like that of an infertile egg laid by a hen without a cock; the essential is missing... And as far as the power of divination of this sorcerer goes, could he not have read your interior? Bring him to me and I will show you that he sees only what one allows him to see.' - The next day Lie Zi brought the sorcerer, who saw Hu Zi as a doctor sees a patient. After the visit the sorcerer said to Lie Zi: 'Your master is a dead man; he will be finished within ten days; I saw, when I looked at him, a vision of humid ashes.' - Lie Zi went back crying and reported the sorcerer's words to Hu Zi. 'That,' said Hu Zi, 'is because I showed myself to him in the form of a winter earth, all my energy being immobilized. This phenomenon is only produced in common people at the approach of death, and it has made him believe that my end is close. Bring him again, and you will see the next part of the experiment.' - The next day Lie Zi brought back the sorcerer. After the visit the latter said: 'It is good that your master addressed himself to me. He is already improving. Today I saw in him only signs of life; what I saw in him yesterday was therefore only a passing phase, not the end.' - When Lie Zi had reported these words to Hu Zi, the latter said: 'That is because I showed myself to him in the form of a sunlit earth, all the springs of my energy acting. Bring him once more.' - The next day Lie Zi brought back the sorcerer. After the visit the latter said: 'His condition is too indeterminate. I cannot make any prognostication. After deliberation, I will pronounce on it.' - Lie Zi reported these words to Hu Zi, who said: 'That is because I showed myself to him

\*This part has probably been displaced. Compare with Lie Zi, chapter 2 L.

in the form of the great chaos, with all my forces held in balance. He could distinguish nothing. An eddy, a whirlpool, can be caused by a sea-monster, a reef, a current, or yet a half-dozen other causes; it is an indeterminate thing, susceptible of nine diverse explanations. The great chaos is even more so. Bring him again, just once more.' - The next day Lie Zi brought back the sorcerer. At the first glance the latter fled. Desperately Lie Zi ran after him, but could not catch up with him. - 'He will come back no more,' said Hu Zi. 'I showed myself to him in the state of my emanation from the Principle. He has seen, in an immense void, something like a serpent writhing, something gushing towards him. This spectacle, unintelligible to him, has terrified him and put him to flight.' - Convinced that he was as yet nothing but ignorant, Lie Zi confined himself within his house for three consecutive years. He did the housework for his wife and served the pigs with respect, in order to destroy in himself the vanity which had almost made him desert his master. He cast off all interest, freed himself from all artificial culture, and directed all his forces towards original simplicity. Finally, he became like a lump of earth, closed and insensible to all that happened around him, and remained in this state until his end.

**F.** Make of non-action your glory, ambition, business, and science. Non-action does not wear one out. It is impersonal. It gives what it has received from heaven, without keeping anything for itself. It is essentially a void. - The superior man only exercises his intelligence like a mirror. He knows and understands without feeling attraction or repulsion, or it making a permanent impression on him. This being so, he is superior to all things, and neutral with respect to them.

**G.** Carried Away, King of the Southern Sea, and Turned Away, King of the Northern Sea, were on good terms with Chaos, King of the Centre. They asked themselves what service they could render him. - 'Men,' they said, 'have seven orifices (two eyes, ears, nostrils, and a mouth). This poor Chaos hasn't any. Let's make some for him.' Setting themselves to work, they made him one orifice a day. On the seventh day Chaos died (ceased to be Chaos). - All beings should be left in their natural deprived state; one should not seek to perfect them artificially, otherwise they cease to be what they were, and should remain.

Chapter 8. Webbed Feet.

**A.** The body has produced such things as a membrane linking the toes, a super-numerary finger, it is true, but in excess of what is normal. It is the same for a growth or a tumour; whatever issues from the body in such a way, is against nature. One must say the same of various theories on goodness and fairness (virtues) born of the mind, and tastes which come from the five viscera (of the temperament) of each one of us. These things are not natural, but artificial, morbid. They do not conform to the norm. Yes, just as the membrane linking a man's toes, and the super-numerary finger on his hand, hinder his natural physical movements; in the same way his tastes, and the virtues imagined by his mind, hinder his natural moral functioning. - Perversion of sight brings about an excess of colouring and ornamentation, which the painter Li Zhu promoted. Perversion of hearing produces abuse of musical harmony, which the musician Shi Kuang instigated. Theories on goodness and fairness produce reputation hunters such as Zeng Shen, Shi Qiu\*, and others who used the flutes and tambourines of the whole empire to make their unrealizable utopias famous. Argumentative abuse produces men like Yang Zhu and Mo Zi, who make up reasons and deductions, just as one moulds tiles and makes ropes; for whom discussing substance and accidents, similarity and difference, make a mental game; they are sophists and rhetoricians who wear themselves out with useless efforts and words. All this is only a waste of time and against the truth, which consists in keeping the natural, and excluding the artificial. One should not do violence to nature, even under pretext of putting it right. The complex should stay complex, the simple, simple. The long should remain long, and the short, short. Guard yourself from wanting to lengthen a duck's feet, or shorten a crane's. To try to do such things would cause them suffering, which is the characteristic note of everything against nature, whereas pleasure is the mark of the natural.

**B.** It follows from these principles that the artificial goodness and fairness of Confucius are not sentiments natural to man, for their acquisition and exercise are accompanied by hindrance and suffering. Those who have webbed feet, or too many fingers, suffer from their physical deformity, or excess, when they move. In our days, those who pose for goodness and justice, suffer to see what is happening, and suffer from struggling against human passions. No! Goodness and fairness are not natural sentiments; otherwise they would be more apparent in the world, which, for the last eighteen centuries has been only struggle and noise. - The use of the quarter-circle and the line, of compass and square,


\*Shi Yu alias Shi Qiu. 'Entretiens de Confucius,' bk. VIII, ch. XV.

only produces regular forms at the cost of losing natural harmony and beauty. The cords that bind, glue that sticks, and varnish that covers, all do violence to the products of art. Rhythm in rites and music, official declamations on goodness and fairness, designed to influence the hearts of men, are artificial, conventional, and against nature. Nature rules the world. Nature's beings have become curved without use of the quarter-circle, straight without use of the line, round and square without use of the compass and square. Everything holds in nature without cords, glue, or varnish. Everything becomes, without violence, following a sort of call or irresistible attraction. Beings do not ask themselves why they became, they develop without knowing how, the manner of their becoming and development being intrinsic. It is, and has always been, thus, from an invisible law. So why pretend to tie up men and unite them with artificial cords of goodness and fairness, rites and music, the cords, glue, and varnish of philosophical politicians? Why not let them follow their nature?... Since Emperor Shun (towards 2255 B.C.) disorientated the empire with his false formula 'goodness and fairness'... human nature has suffered, stifled by the artificial and conventional.

C. Yes, from Shun until now, men have followed diverse lures, not their true nature. The common people kill themselves for money, the educated for reputation, nobles for the glory of their house, and Sages for the empire. Famous men of diverse types have all this in common, that they have acted against nature and are thereby ruined. What does the diversity of the world matter, if the fatal result is the same? - Two shepherds who have lost their sheep, the one through having studied, the other through having played, have suffered the same loss. - Bo Yi perished for the love of glory, and Zhi because of brigandage, different motives, but identical result. - However official history says that Bo Yi was a noble character, because he sacrificed himself for goodness and fairness; on the other hand it says that Zhi was base, because he perished for the love of gain. In sum, as they came to the same end, there is no reason to make the distinction of noble and common in their case. Both of them outraged their nature, and perished alike. Then why praise Bo Yi and blame Zhi?

D. No, it is the same for Zeng Shen and Shi Qiu, I will not speak well of those who did violence to their nature by practising goodness and fairness, nor of those who applied themselves to the study of tastes, sounds, or colours, even if they are famous like Yu Er, Shi Kuang, or Li Zhu. No, man is not good because he practises artificial goodness and fairness; he is good by exercise of his natural faculties. To follow one's natural appetites makes

good use of taste, to listen to one's inner voice makes good use of hearing. To look only at oneself makes good use of sight. Those who look at, and listen to, others, take something from their manner and judgement to the detriment of their own natural sense. From the moment that their natural rectitude is deformed, whether they be reputed bandits like Zhi or Sages like Bo Yi matters little to me; they have all, in my view, gone astray. Because for me the rule is conformity, or non-conformity to nature. Artificial goodness and fairness are as odious to me as vice and depravity.





**Chapter 9. Trained Horses.**

**A.** Horses have by nature hooves capable of treading the snow, and hair impenetrable to the cold. They eat grass, drink water, and run and jump. That is their true nature, which has nothing to do with courtyards and stables... When Bo Lao, the first groom, declared that he alone knew how to deal with horses; when he taught men to brand them, trim their hair, shoe them, bridle them, fetter them, and to pen in these poor beasts, then two or three out of ten horses died prematurely, because of this violence against their nature. When the art of dressage progressed, they made them suffer hunger and thirst to harden them, and they forced them to gallop in squadrons, to order and measure, to make them warlike. The bit tormented their mouth, and the horsewhip cut their rump. Then, out of ten horses, five died prematurely, because of this violence against nature. - When the first potter announced that he knew how to treat clay, they made from this material round vases on the wheel and square bricks in the mould. - When the first carpenter declared that he knew how to work wood, they gave to this material curved or straight forms, by means of the point and chalk line. - Is this truly how to treat horses, clay, and wood, according to their nature? Certainly not. Yet, however, from age to age, men have praised the first groom, the first potter, and the first carpenter, for their genius and their inventions.

**B.** Likewise they praise those who invented the modern form of government, for their genius and inventions. In my view, this is an error. Man's condition was quite different under the good sovereigns of antiquity. People followed their nature, and nothing but their nature. Each person wove his own clothing and laboured for his own food. They formed a whole without division, ruled by a single natural law. In those times of perfect naturalism, men walked as they pleased, and let their eyes wander in freedom. No ritual controlled their walking and looking. In the mountains there were neither paths nor dykes, on the water neither boats nor dams. All beings were born and lived in common. Flying beings and quadrupeds lived in the grass which grew spontaneously. As man did them no harm, the animals let themselves be led by him without resistance, and the birds did not worry if one looked in their nest. Yes, at that time of perfect naturalism, men lived as brothers to the animals, on the basis of equality with all beings. They were ignorant then of the distinction made famous by Confucius, between the Sage and the common man. Equally deprived of science, men all acted according to their nature. Equally without ambition, all acted simply. Everywhere nature opened out freely.

**C.** All this was done away with when the first Sage appeared.

Seeing him straining himself and twirling himself ritually, hearing him hold forth on goodness and fairness, men, astonished, asked themselves if they had not been wrong up till then. Then came the intoxication of music, and infatuation with ceremonies. Alas, the artificial carried away the natural. In consequence, peace and charity disappeared from the world. Man made war against the animals, which were sacrificed for his luxury. In order to make offering vases, he put wood to the torture. In order to make ritual sceptres, he inflicted their style on to jade. Under pretext of goodness and fairness he did violence to nature. Rites and music ruined the naturalness of movements. The rules of painting disordered the colours. The official scale disordered the tones of music. In summary, artists are guilty of having tormented matter in order to execute their works of art, and Sages are execrable for having substituted imitation goodness and fairness for what was natural. - Once, in the state of nature, horses grazed on grass and drank water. When they were happy they rubbed their necks together. When they were angry, they did a half-turn and kicked out. Knowing no more than that, they were perfectly simple and natural. But when Bo Lao had harnessed them, they became knavish and wicked, through hatred of the bit and bridle. This man is guilty of the crime of having perverted horses. - At the time of old Emperor He Xu, men stayed in their houses doing nothing, or went for a walk without knowing where they were going. When their appetite was satisfied they patted themselves on the stomach as a sign of contentment. Knowing no more than that, they were perfectly simple and natural. But when the first Sage had taught them to bow and scrape ritually to the sound of music, and to make sentimental contortions in the name of goodness and fairness, then competitions began for know-how and riches. There arose immeasurable pretensions and insatiable ambitions. It is the crime of the Sage to have thus disorientated humanity.

## Chapter 10. Thieves, Great And Small.

A. The common people secure their sacks and trunks with ropes and strong locks, from fear that small thieves may get their hands into them. Having done this, they believe themselves, and are considered to be, wise. Then comes a great thief who carries off sacks and trunks with their ropes and locks, very happy that someone has made up his packages so well. And it turns out that the wisdom of these common people had consisted in preparing the thief's booty for him. - It is the same in matters of government and administration. Those who are commonly called Sages, are nothing but package makers for future brigands. Here is an example: In the Principality of Qi, all had been ruled well, according to the laws of the Sages. The population was so great that each village could hear the cocks and dogs of the neighbouring village. The waters were exploited by nets and traps, the earth by the plough and the hoe. Everywhere, in the temples of the ancestors, of the earth spirit and the patron of the harvests, the urban centres, the countryside, and even the remote corners, there was a most perfect order. One fine day, Tian Cheng Zi assassinated the Prince of Qi (in 482 B.C.) and took his principality, with all that the Sages had put there. Then, this brigand enjoyed the fruit of his crime as peacefully as in the times of Yao and Shun. No prince, great or small, dared attempt to take him by the throat. On his death, he bequeathed the principality to his successors (who kept it until 221 B.C.). That again, was thanks to the Sages, who advised everyone to submit to the *fait accompli*. - The most famous of the Sages of history have thus worked for great thieves, even so far as sacrificing their lives. Long Feng was decapitated, Bi Gan was disembowelled, Chang Long was drawn, Zi Xu perished in the water. The sum is that professional brigands also apply, in their way, the principles of Sages. Look what the famous Zhi taught his pupils: 'Divining where there is a good hoard is wisdom; being the first to go in is courage; leaving last is expedience; judging if the coup is feasible or not, is prudence; dividing the booty equally, is goodness and fairness; only those who unite these qualities in themselves are worthy brigands.' - Thus, if the principles of Sages have sometimes benefited honest people, they have benefited villains also and more often, to the detriment of honest people. I will only cite as evidence for what I say, the two historical facts recalled by the sentences: 'When the lips are cut off the teeth are cold'... and 'The bad wine of Lu caused the siege of Han Dan\*.' - Yes, the apparition of Sages causes brigands to appear, and the disappearance of Sages the disappearance of brigands. Sages and brigands, these two terms are correlative, linked with each other, like torrent and flood, ditch and embankment. - I repeat, if the race of Sages came to be extinct, brigands would disappear, and there would be perfect

\*TH pages 189,226.

peace in this world. It is because the race of Sages does not become extinct that there are always brigands. The more one uses Sages to govern the state, the more the brigands multiply; because the inventions of Sages produce them. By the invention of measures of capacity, of weights and scales, of contracts divided into two, and of seals, they have taught fraud to many. By the invention of goodness and fairness, they have taught many malice and knavery. - If a poor devil were to steal the buckle of a belt, he would be decapitated. If a great thief were to steal a principality, he would become a lord, and the extollers of goodness and fairness (Sages, hired politicians) would flock to him and place all their wisdom at his disposal. The logical conclusion of this is that one should not waste one's time starting with small thefts, but begin straight away by stealing a principality. Then one will not have to go to the trouble of thieving again; one will no longer have to fear the executioner's axe. Then one will have all the Sages, with all their inventions, for oneself. Yes, making brigands and preventing their being unmade, is the work of Sages (professional politicians).

**B.** It is said\*, 'that the fish should not leave deep water where it lives ignored, but in safety; that a state should not show its resources, out of fear of being ravaged'... Now Sages (politicians) are considered to be a resource of the state. One should therefore hide them, keep them in obscurity, not employ them. Thus the race of Sages would become extinct, and with it the race of brigands would also become extinct. Pulverize the jade and the pearls and there will be no more thieves. Burn contracts, break up the seals, and men will become honest again. Suppress weights and measures, and there will be no more quarrels. Destroy radically all the artificial institutions of the Sages, and people will find their own good natural sense. Abolish the scale of tones, break up the musical instruments, block up the ears of the musicians, and men will recover their natural hearing. Abolish the spectrum of colours and the rules of painting, put out the eyes of the painters, and men will recover their natural sight. Prohibit the spike and chalk line, the compass and the square; break the fingers of the carpenters, and men will rediscover natural ways, those which are described as 'dexterity under an air of awkwardness\*\*.' Brand Zeng Shen and Shi Qiu (legalists), gag Yang Zhu and Mo Zi (sophists), ban the goodness-fairness formula (of the Confucians), and the natural ways may once more exercise their mysterious and unifying virtue.

\*Lao Zi, chapter 36.

\*\*Lao Zi, chapter 45. Each kind of being, says the commentary, has its natural type. Thus each species of spider has its form of web, special, but invariable. Therefore man should hold himself to a few simple natural types, neither multiplying nor embellishing them. All art is perversion.

Yes, come back to sight, hearing, good sense, to natural instinct, and be done with deafening, glaring ramblings, and artificial grimaces. Philosophers, musicians, painters, diverse artists, have only wronged and perverted men, through plausible appearances. They have not been of any real use to humanity.

C. It was quite otherwise, at the time of perfect nature, of the ancient sovereigns, before Fu Xi, Shen Nong, and the Yellow Emperor. Then men only knew knotted cords as far as the Annals were concerned. They found their coarse food good, as also their simple clothing. They were happy in their primitive ways, and peaceable in their poor habitations. The need to have relationships with others did not torment them. They died of old age before having visited the neighbouring principality, which they had seen from afar, and from which they had heard the dogs and cocks every day\*. In those times, because of their ways, peace and order were absolute. - Why is it quite otherwise in our time? Because the governments are tainted by Sages and their inventions. The people strain their necks and stand on tiptoe to look in the direction whence some so-called Sage comes. They abandon their parents, they leave their master, to run after this man. Pedestrians follow each other in a queue, and files of carriages make deep ruts in the road leading to his door. All this is because the common people, imitating the princes, are infatuated with the pursuit of knowledge. Now nothing is more deadly for a state than this unfortunate infatuation.

D. It is artificial knowledge, against nature, which has caused all the ills of the world, and the unhappiness of all those who inhabit it. The invention of bows and barbed arrows, and spring traps, has brought unhappiness to the birds of the air. The invention of fish-hooks, baits, nets, and traps, has brought unhappiness to the fish in the water. The invention of nets and snares has brought unhappiness to the quadrupeds in their coverts. The invention of sophistry, traitorous and venomous, with its theories of substance and accidents, and its arguments on identity and difference, has troubled the simplicity of the common people. Yes, the love of knowledge, inventions, and innovations, is responsible for all the ills of the world. Preoccupied with learning what they do not know (the vain science of the sophists), men lose what they know (the natural truth of good sense). Preoccupied with criticizing the opinions of others, they close their eyes to their own errors. From this follows a moral disorder which has repercussions in heaven on the sun and moon, on earth on the mountains and rivers, and in the intermediate space on the four seasons, reaching even as far as the insects (locusts, etc.) which migrate and swarm out of time.

\*Lao Zi, chapter 80.

All beings are in danger of losing the propriety of their nature. It is the love of knowledge that has caused this disorder. It has been going on throughout the three dynasties. For eighteen centuries they have been accustomed to pooh-pooh at natural simplicity and to make a big thing of ritual knavery. They have become accustomed to prefer verbose and fallacious politics to frank and loyal non-action. It is the praters (Sages, politicians, rhetoricians) who have put disorder into the world.

## Chapter 11. True And False Politics.

**A.** One must let the world follow its course, and not try to govern. Otherwise people will no longer act naturally (but artificially, legally, ritually, etc.). When each one's nature, being sane, looks after itself and acts in its own sphere, then the world is governed naturally and by itself; there is no need to intervene. In the old days Yao governed to make his subjects happy. Now happiness, which is a passion, ruptures natural apathy. Yao's government was therefore defective, since he impassioned his subjects. - The wicked Jie afflicted his subjects. Now affliction, which is a passion, ruptures natural placidity. Jie's government was therefore defective, since he impassioned his subjects. - All emotion, being against nature, is unstable and cannot last. Pleasure and satisfaction are emotions of the principle yang. Displeasure and dissatisfaction are emotions of the principle yin. In the macrocosm, disturbance of the yin and yang causes the four seasons to come out of time, and disrupts the succession of heat and cold... In the human microcosm, disturbance of the yin and yang by the passions also causes great disorders. The body suffers, minds soften; men no longer keep themselves in their place, lose control of their thoughts and desires, and undertake without achieving, (their mobile passions carrying them without cease to other objects). Then in the empire ambitious pretensions and struggles for domination were born. Some became Zhis (brigands), others Zeng Shens and Shi Qius (politicians). They then legislated with the aim of rewarding the good and punishing the wicked. A superhuman, impossible task, in view of the numbers of each. - Alas, it is with that aim, that the governments of the three dynasties have wasted their time and effort, instead of peacefully following their nature and destiny. - All theories, all conventions, are completely false. Optical theories have falsified the natural sense of colours. Acoustic theories have falsified the notion of sounds. Theories of goodness have perverted the spontaneity of relationships. Theories of fairness have obliterated people's inner sense of justice. Theories of rites have produced subtlety, those of music have incited to lust. Theories of wisdom have multiplied the politicians, those of knowledge have multiplied the quibblers. It would still be all right, if, keeping themselves practically to the natural laws, they speculated theoretically on the above themes; that would be a matter of indifference. But if, having done away with the natural laws, they let these speculations influence practice, there will be disorder and anarchy; and if one comes to honour their theories, to give them the force of law, alas, poor world, it will be in a complete frenzy. - Look what the government has come to in our days, nothing but an uninterrupted succession of rites. Hardly has one ceremony finished, before it is necessary to keep one's abstinence in preparation

for the next, and then go through all the series of bowings and scrapings, songs and dances, and so on, without respite or end. A true Sage would act quite differently, if, obviously against his will, he had to take charge of the empire. Holding himself to non-action, he would use the leisure of his non-intervention to give free course to his natural inclinations. The empire would find itself well off in the hands of this man\*. Without putting his organs to work, without using his corporeal senses, seated motionless, he would see all with his transcendent eye; absorbed in contemplation he would shake all like thunder; the physical sky would adapt itself with docility to the movements of his spirit; all beings would follow the (negative) impulsion of his non-intervention, just as dust goes with the wind. Why should this man apply himself to the manipulation of the empire, when to let it go is enough?

B. Cui Zhu asked Lao Dan: 'How can one govern men without positive action?' Lao Dan said: 'By doing no violence to their hearts. The heart of man is made so that any oppression puts it down, any excitation lifts it up. Deprived it becomes inert; excited it becomes carried away. Sometimes supple, it bends to everything; sometimes it is hard enough to break everything. Sometimes it is burning like fire, sometimes it becomes cold like ice. Its expansion is so rapid that, in the time it takes to nod your head, it has been to the end of the four oceans and come back. Its concentration is profound like an abyss, its movements free and incoercible, like those of the heavenly bodies. The human heart is proud of its freedom, its nature not letting itself be attached to anyone.' - Now in the old days (towards 3000 B.C.) the Yellow Emperor was the first to do violence to the human heart, with his theories on goodness and fairness. Then Yao and Shun used up their strength rushing about for the material welfare of their subjects. They harmed their viscera in the exercise of goodness and fairness, and wasted their sweat and breath devising rules for these artificial virtues. And for all that, they did not succeed. They had to put down the uprisings of Huan Dou at Chong Shan, the San Miaos at San Wei, and Gong Gong at You Du. This resorting to violence proves clearly that, despite their goodness and fairness, the empire was not devotedly in submission to them. It was much worse under the three dynasties. Under them appeared Jies (tyrants) and Zhis (brigands), Zeng Shens and Shi Qius (politicians), and finally the Confucians and the Mo-ists. What times! The theoreticians for and against regarded each other with animosity; wise and foolish mutually contradicted each other; good and bad persecuted each other reciprocally, and the liars and the truthful mocked one another. The empire fell into decadence. They no longer understood the first principles, and the remnants of natural virtue disappeared,

\*Lao Zi chapter 13.



as if consumed by fire, or carried off in a great wave. Everyone wished to become wise in order to succeed, and the people wore themselves out in vain efforts. - It was then that they invented the mathematical system of government\*. The empire was squared up with the axe and the saw. The penalty for those who deviated from the straight line was death. Hammers and chisels were applied to the manners and customs of life. The result was a turning upside-down, a general collapse. The people turned against the Sages and princes. The Sages had to hide themselves in mountain caves, and the princes were no longer safe in their family temples. Violent reactions followed when Sages and princes came back to power. Now the bodies of those punished are piled high, prisoners march past in long chains, everywhere one sees nothing but men punished in diverse ways. And in the middle of this atrocious decor, amongst the handcuffs, fetters, and instruments of torture, the Confucians and Mo-ists stand on tiptoe to appear big, turn up their sleeves, and complacently admire their work. Ah, the hardening of these men is extreme. Extreme is their immodesty! Could torture summarize the wisdom of the Sages? Could the handcuffs, fetters, and tortures, be the expression of their goodness and fairness? Could Zeng Shen and Shi Qiu, these typical Sages, not be more evil than the tyrant Jie and the brigand Zhi? The saying 'exterminate wisdom, destroy knowledge, and the empire will spontaneously return to order,' is right.

C. The Yellow Emperor had reigned for nineteen years and his orders were obeyed throughout the empire, when he heard of Master Guang Cheng, who lived on Mount Kong Tong. He sought him out and addressed him in the following words: 'I have heard tell, Master, that you have reached the supreme Principle. I venture to ask you to communicate its quintessence to me. I will use it for making good cereal harvests to nourish the people. I will regulate the temperature for the benefit of all living beings. Give me the formula, please.' - Master Guang Cheng replied: 'You push ambition even as far as wishing to lord it over nature. To entrust its forces to you, would be to the loss of all beings. Passionate man, if you were to govern the world, you would want it to rain before the clouds were formed, you would make the leaves fall whilst still green, the sun and the moon would soon be extinguished. Conceited and selfish being, what can you have in common with the supreme Principle?' - The Yellow Emperor returned home confused, gave up his government, and lived in a makeshift hut with a straw mat as his sole furnishing. After spending three months in this retreat, reflecting and meditating, he went back to Master Guang Cheng, whom he found lying with his head towards the north (looking south, the position of a teacher).

\*TH pages 196-201.

Taking the place of a pupil, quite humbly, the Yellow Emperor approached on his knees, prostrated himself, touching the ground with his forehead, and said: 'I know, Master, that you have reached the supreme Principle. Will you teach me how to conduct and conserve myself?' - 'Well put, this time,' said Master Guang Cheng. 'Come closer, I am going to reveal the basis of the Principle to you. Its essence is mystery; it is obscurity, indistinction, silence. When one looks at nothing, listens to nothing, envelops one's spirit in withdrawal, the matter of the body becomes spontaneously right. Be withdrawn, detached, don't fatigue your body or rouse your instincts, and you can last forever. When your eyes no longer look at anything, when your ears no longer listen to anything, when your heart (intelligence and will) knows and desires nothing more, when your spirit has enveloped and in a sense absorbed your matter, then this matter (your body) will last forever. Take care of your interior, defend your exterior. Wishing to learn many things is what wears one out... Follow me in spirit, beyond the light as far as the principle yang of all splendour; and beyond the darkness as far as the principle yin of darkness. Follow me now, beyond these two principles, as far as unity (the supreme Principle) which rules over heaven and earth, which contains in germ, and from which emanate, the yin and the yang, and all beings. Knowing this Principle is the great science which does not wear one out. Holding oneself at rest in its contemplation is what makes one last forever. Any being who conserves himself, keeps his vigour. I myself have embraced unity; I am established in universal harmony. I have now lived twelve hundred years, and my body is not weakened.' - 'You are a heavenly being,' said the Yellow Emperor, touching his forehead on the ground. - 'Listen,' said Master Guang Cheng, 'without interrupting. The first Principle is essentially infinite and unfathomable; men use in error, when speaking of it, the terms "end" and "highest." Those who knew it became the emperors and kings of the heroic age and ended by becoming gods. Those who did not know it, remained terrestrial beings, ignorant and sensual. Nowadays the first Principle is so forgotten that all beings leaving the earth, return to it. I also will stay no longer in this world. I leave you, to go beyond the gate of the infinite, to saunter in immeasurable spaces. I am going to unite my light with that of the sun and the moon; I am going to fuse my duration with that of heaven and earth. I don't even wish to know if men think as I do, or differently. When they are all dead, I will survive, having alone, in these decadent times, reached union with unity.'

**D.** The politician Yun Jiang, who was wandering in the east, beyond the Fu Yao River, unexpectedly met the immortal Hong Meng, who was hopping along, beating out a rhythm on his thighs\*.

\*Daoist immortals are almost always shown in eccentric posture, a sign of their contempt for ordinary life.

Surprised, Yun Jiang stopped, assumed the ritual posture, and said to him: 'Venerable one, who are you? What are you doing there?' - Without ceasing to hop, and tap on his thighs, Hong Meng replied: 'I am taking a walk.' Convinced that he was dealing with a transcendent being, Yun Jiang said: 'I would like to ask you a question.' - 'Bah,' said Hong Meng. - 'Yes,' said Yun Jiang. 'The heavenly influx is upset, the earthly one is hindered; the six emanations are obstructed, the four seasons are deranged. I would like to put order back into the universe, for the good of the beings who inhabit it. Will you tell me how?' - 'I don't know, I don't know,' said Hong Meng, shaking his head, slapping his sides, and hopping... Yun Jiang could get no further. - Three years later, when he was wandering again, beyond the plain of You Song in the east, Yun Jiang again unexpectedly met Hong Meng. Full of joy, he ran towards him, and reached him saying: 'Heavenly being, do you still remember me?' Then, prostrating himself twice and bowing his head, he added: 'I wish to ask you a question.' - 'What can I teach you?' said Hong Meng; 'I who walk without knowing why, who wander without knowing where I am going; I who only saunter about without being occupied with anything, so as to avoid being annoyed by any untimely interference.' - 'I also,' said Yun Jiang, 'would like, as you, to wander free and without worries; but people follow me everywhere I go; it is real slavery; they have just let me go and I profit from this respite to question you.' - 'Poor man,' said Hong Meng; 'what can I say to you, involved as you are with the government of men? Who troubles the empire, does violence to nature, and hinders the action of heaven and earth? Who upsets the animals, troubles the sleep of the birds, and annoys even the plants and the insects? Who acts thus, if it is not the politician with his systems for governing men?' - 'Is that how you judge me?' said Yun Jiang. 'I have gone to much trouble to find you; I beg you to instruct me.' - 'Actually,' said Hong Meng, 'you have great need to learn. Listen, therefore... Begin by intervening in nothing, and everything will naturally follow its course. Get rid of your personality (literally, let your body fall off like clothing), give up the use of your senses, forget relationships and contingencies, drown yourself in the great whole; rid yourself of your will and intelligence, annihilate yourself by abstraction even as far as no longer having a soul. What's the good of speculating, since the unconscious is the universal law? The mass of beings return unconsciously to their origin. He who spends his life in unconsciousness, follows his nature. Since he is born spontaneously without anyone having asked him who or what he wished to be, nature wants him to return likewise to it, without having known either who or why.' - 'Ah,' cried Yun Jiang, 'heavenly being, you have enlightened me, transformed me. Throughout my life I have searched for the solution to the problem, and now I have it'... That said, Yun

Jiang prostrated himself with his forehead on the ground, got up, and continued on his way.

**E.** The great concern of common politicians is to attach themselves to men; they wash their hands of those who will not make common cause with them. Since they prefer those who share their opinion, and detest those who are in opposition, it happens that they seek only, in fact, their own elevation. When they have achieved the object of their ambition, are they truly superior to the common people? Are they useful for the country? Imposing on the people what they are pleased to call their experience, is this not worse than abandoning them to themselves? Smitten with the idea of doing good to the principality, which they administer after the system of the three ancient dynasties, they pay no attention to the vices of that system. Their enterprise exposes the principality to the gravest of hazards. It is lucky if it escapes. It has one chance of salvation in ten thousand. For one principality in which they succeed imperfectly, they absolutely ruin ten thousand others. Is it sad enough that the masters of the earth don't perceive this danger? The most important thing of all is within their grasp. They should not confide it to such limited and selfish people. If only they were to put their trust in transcendent men, in those who are free of all worldly interest, who come and go in space, walk in the nine regions, and who are citizens, not of the country, but of the universe. They are the most noble men of all\*. The esteem of common men attaches to them just as infallibly as a shadow follows an opaque body, as an echo follows a sound. When he is consulted, the transcendent man exhausts the question by his reply, and makes good the wishes of the consultant. He is the resort of all the empire. His rest is calm and silent, his comings and goings are without determined aim. He leads on and brings back those he speaks with, without shock and through an impalpable influence. His movements have no fixed rules. Like the sun, he shines always. This man can be summed up by these words: He is one with the great whole. He is the great whole and is no longer himself. Having no particular existence, he no longer has any possessiveness. The ancient emperors still had some possessiveness. It is necessary to have none at all, in order to become the friend of heaven and earth, to reach union.

**F.** The beings that fill up the world are small, but respectable. The people are humble, but necessary. Their affairs are uncertain, but important. The laws are hard, but indispensable. Justice is unsympathetic, but obligatory. Unselfish affection is sympathetic. The

\*Commentary: Supreme nobility consists in having absolute disregard for men and worldly things, along with mystical union with the great whole.

rites are petty, but one must perform them. These sayings sum up the common wisdom. - And I add: At the centre of all things and superior to all, is the supreme Principle, unique and transforming itself into productive action. Heaven, the sky (physical instrument of the productive action of the Principle), is transcendent and acts without cease. The true Sages also have the rule of letting heaven act without aiding it, letting the productive action act without interference, leaving the first Principle free. That is what is important in their eyes. For the rest, like the common practice, they are loving without affection, just without pretension, ritualistic without scrupulosity, active without fuss or ceremonies, legal without passion, devoted to the people and respectful of the rights of all. They do not consider any beings as particularly apt, and yet use them in the absence of better means. The ignorance of those who do not understand the action of heaven, comes from the fact that they do not clearly understand the action of the supreme Principle, of which heaven is the instrument. Those who have no notion of the Principle are good-for-nothing, one should weep for them. - There are two ways, the heavenly way and the human way. Concentrating oneself nobly on non-action, is the way of heaven. Frittering oneself away, and troubling over details, is the human way. The two ways are very different. We are going to scrutinize them carefully in the following chapters.

## Chapter 12. Heaven And Earth.

**A.** A uniform transforming force emanates from the immense complex of heaven and earth; a unique law governs the mass of beings; a single ruler rules over a populous humanity. The ruler's power derives from the Principle; his person is chosen by heaven; so that he is referred to as mysterious, like the Principle. The rulers of antiquity abstained from all personal intervention, letting heaven govern through them. When the Principle acts through the ruler, his ministers and officials, all beings respond by absolute submission to this just and enlightened government. Above the universe the first Principle influences heaven and earth, which transmit this influence to all beings, making for good government in the world of men and bringing out talents and abilities. Looked at another way, all prosperity comes from the government, whose effectiveness derives from the Principle, through the intermediary of heaven and earth. That is why, when the ancient rulers desired nothing, there was an abundance in the world; they did not act, and everything evolved; they remained deep in meditation, and the people lived in the most perfect order. The old saying sums this up as follows: 'For him who is united with Unity, everything prospers; to him who has no personal interest, even the subtle beings are subjected.'

**B.** How true are these words of the Master! How great, how immense is the Principle which covers and supports all beings! The ruler should take great care to follow his inner sense! Natural action is heavenly action; the spontaneous verb is the heavenly influence; to love all men and do good to all beings is true goodness; to fuse all differences into one is true greatness; not to wish to dominate others in any way is true breadth of spirit; to possess diverse things without dividing one's heart is true wealth; to follow the heavenly influence is the way to act; to act under this influence is to act effectively; to serve as a docile intermediary of the Principle is perfection; not to allow one's determination to be affected by anything is constancy. The ruler should concentrate these six principles in himself, then apply them to the government, and everything will follow its natural course. He should leave the gold in the rocks and the pearls in the depths, scorn wealth and honour, and be indifferent to long life and early death. He should be neither vain in prosperity nor humiliated by adversity, he should disdain all the goods of this world, and he should not glorify himself because of his exaltation. His glory should be in understanding that all beings are a single universal complex, and that life and death are two modalities of the same being.

**C.** The Master has said: 'The action of the Principle through heaven

is infinite in its expansion, ungraspable in its subtlety. It resides, imperceptible, in all beings, as the cause of their being and their qualities. It is that which resonates in metals and sonorous flints. It is also in the blow that makes them resonate. Without it, nothing would be... The man who takes the qualities of a king from it, walks in simplicity and abstains from occupation with multiple things. Keeping himself with the origin, the source, united with unity, he knows like the genies, by intuition in the Principle. In consequence his capacity extends to everything. When his spirit goes out through one of his senses, for example sight, as soon as it meets a being, it grasps it, penetrates it, and knows it in depth. This is because beings have become what they are through participation in the Principle, and they are known through participation in the virtue of the Principle. To look after beings, knowing their nature, to act on them with full knowledge of the Principle, these are the attributes of one born to be king. He appears unexpectedly on the scene of the world, plays his role, and all beings give themselves to him. This is because he has received from the Principle the qualities which make a king. He sees in the darkness of the Principle, he hears the mute word of the Principle. For him, darkness is light, silence is harmony. He grasps being, at the most profound level of being; and his purpose, at the highest abstraction, is the Principle. Keeping himself at this height, entirely empty and denuded, he gives what is fitting to all. His action extends in time and space.'

D. The Yellow Emperor had advanced as far as the north of the Red River, and climbed Mount Kun Lun in order to view the regions of the south, when he lost his black pearl (his treasure, the notion of the Principle, lost through having surrendered himself to his ambitious dreams). He made Science look for it, but he could not recover it. Investigation and Discussion could not find it either. Finally, Abstraction recovered it. The Yellow Emperor said to himself: 'Is it not strange that it was found by Abstraction, considered by the common people to be the least practical of faculties.'

E. Yao was instructed by Xu You, disciple of Nie Que, disciple of Wang Ni, disciple of Pi Yi. Yao was thinking of abdicating in order to devote himself to contemplation, so he asked Xu You: 'Has Nie Que the qualities to collaborate with heaven (to be emperor in my place)? If he has, I will make his master, Wang Ni\*, impose the position on him.' - 'That,' said Xu You, 'would be hazardous, perhaps fatal. Nie Que is too intelligent and capable. He would apply his human intelligence and abilities to the government, thereby hindering heaven, the Principle, from governing. He would

\*In China the master's authority is equal or superior to the parents'.

increase taxation, honour the learned, take decisions, preoccupy himself with traditions, entangle himself in complications, listen to opinions, apply theories deductively on the evolution of things, etc. This man is too intelligent to be emperor. Although his nobility qualifies him for the position, his excess of ability makes him only fit to be a minor official. He has what one needs for capturing brigands. If he were to become a minister, it would be a misfortune; if he were to sit on the throne, it would ruin the country.'

F. When Yao was inspecting the territory of Hua, the official in charge of that land said to him: 'O Sage! I wish you prosperity and long life.' - 'Be silent,' said Yao. - But the official continued: 'I wish you wealth.' - 'Silence,' said Yao. - 'And many male children,' concluded the official. - 'Silence,' said Yao, for the third time. - The official replied: 'Long life, wealth, male heirs, all men desire these things. Why do you alone not want them?' - 'Because,' said Yao, 'he who has many sons, has many troubles; he who is rich, has many worries; he who lives a long time, meets many contradictions. These three drawbacks hinder the cultivation of moral virtue, that is why I did not want what you wished for me.' - 'Then,' said the official, 'I no longer consider you a Sage, but an ordinary man. Heaven gives to each individual that it procreates, the sense necessary for its conduct; therefore your sons would sort themselves out on their own. To rid yourself of any encumbrance of wealth, you would only have to distribute it. You preoccupy yourself more than a Sage ever would. The true Sage lives in this world just as a quail lives in a field, without attachment to any home, or worrying about his nourishment. In times of peace, he takes his share of the common prosperity. In times of trouble, he occupies himself with his own interior development and is disinterested in affairs. After a thousand years, weary of this world, he leaves it and ascends towards the immortals. Mounted on a white cloud, he arrives in the region of the Sovereign\*. There, none of the three misfortunes reach him; his body lasts a long time without suffering; he no longer experiences contradictions.' - Having said this, the official moved off. Recognizing that he was a hidden Sage, Yao ran after him and said: 'I have some questions to ask you.' - 'Leave me in peace,' said the official.

G. When Yao governed the empire, Master Gao, known as Bo Cheng, was invested by him with a fief. Yao transmitted the empire to Shun, who transmitted it to Yu\*\*. Then Master Gao gave up his fief, and set himself to cultivating the land. Yu went to see him, and found him busy working on the plain. Approaching him

\*The Sovereign of the Annals and the Odes. Cf. Lao Zi, chapter 4 E.

\*\*To the Daoists, a black sheep who invented systematic politics.



respectfully, he said: 'Master, Emperor Yao invested you with a fief, which you kept until now. Why do you now want to give it up?' - 'Because the world is no longer what it was under Yao,' said Master Gao. 'Under Yao the people conducted themselves well, without being rewarded for their good behaviour; they were obedient without being constrained by chastisement. Now you reward and punish systematically, which has made the people lose their natural qualities. Nature has disappeared, laws have replaced it, and from this there has come lawlessness. Why waste my time? Why hinder my work?'... And, leaning on his plough, Master Gao continued the furrow he had begun, and never looked back at Yu.

**H.** At the great beginning, there was formlessness, the imperceptible being; there was no sentient being, and in consequence, no name\*. The first being was non-sentient, the One, the Principle. The norm, the virtue emanating from the One, which gives birth to all beings, is called *de*. Multiplying itself without end, this participating virtue is called, in each one, *ming*, its share, lot, or destiny. It is through alternating concentration and expansion that the norm gives birth to beings. In the being which is born, certain definite lines specify its corporeal form. This corporeal form contains the vital spirit. Each being has its way of acting, which constitutes its own nature. This is how beings descend from the Principle. They return through mental and moral Daoist culture, which brings individual nature back to conformity with the universal acting virtue, and the particular being to union with the primordial Principle, the great Void, the great Whole. This return, this union, is achieved not through action but cessation; just as a bird closes its beak, ceases its song, and is silent; a silent fusion with heaven and earth, in an apathy which seems stupid to those who understand nothing, but which is true mystical virtue, communion with the evolution of the cosmos.

**I.** Confucius asked Lao Dan: 'Some people seek the essential identity of things, and claim that licit and illicit, yes and no, are one and the same thing. Others seek to distinguish everything, and declare that the non-identity of substance and accidents is reality. Are these people Sages?' - 'They are men who wear themselves out without benefit to themselves,' replied Lao Dan, 'like officials' henchmen, hunters' dogs, and comedians' monkeys. Qiu\*\*, I am going to tell you a truth that you will neither be able to understand nor even repeat correctly. There are no more Sages. Now, men are numerous who, having a head and feet, have neither mind nor ears. But you will search in vain for those who, in their

\*Compare with Lao Zi chapter 1.

\*\*The first name of Confucius; slightly scornful familiarity.

material body, have kept their part of the original Principle intact. Those (the Sages, when there were any) neither acted nor rested, neither lived nor died, neither climbed up nor went down, through any effort of their own, but let themselves go along the thread of universal evolution. To do that (and in consequence become a true Daoist Sage) is in the power of all men. To become a Sage, it is only necessary to forget beings (individuals), heaven (the causes), and oneself (one's interests). Through this universal forgetfulness, a man becomes one with Heaven, melts himself in the cosmos.'

**J.** Jianglü Mian visited Master Ji Che and said to him: 'The Prince of Lu asked me to advise him how to govern his principality well. I replied that you had not commissioned me for that. He insisted in order to have my personal advice. This is what I said to him; judge if I spoke well or badly... I said to the prince: "Be dignified and sober; employ devoted officers and send away selfish egoists; if you do that, everyone will be on your side." - Ji Che burst out laughing. 'Your politics,' he said, 'are as useful as the mantis that tried to stop a carriage. What you said is absolutely useless, and could be harmful.' - 'But then,' said Jianglü Mian, 'what is the art of governing?' - 'This,' said Ji Che, 'is how the great Sages conducted themselves. They encouraged the people to improve themselves, to advance themselves, by inspiring them with the taste for improvement and advancement; leaving them to evolve spontaneously; and letting them believe that they wished and acted by themselves. That is great politics. These men did not rule at the time of old Yao and Shun (so extolled by Confucius), for they are more ancient than these venerables. They were of primordial origin, and their politics consisted in bringing back to life the spark of cosmic virtue residing in everyone's heart.'

**K.** Zi Gong, a disciple of Confucius, had been to the Principality of Chu, and was coming back towards that of Jin. Near the River Han he saw a man busy watering his vegetable garden. He filled a container at the well and subsequently emptied it into the troughs of his beds of plants - hard work, giving little result. - 'Don't you know,' said Zi Gong, 'that there is a machine with which a hundred beds are easily watered in a day without hard work?' - 'How does it work?' asked the man. - Zi Gong replied: 'It is a counterbalanced ladle which takes the water from one side and pours it out at the other.' - 'Too clever to be good,' said the gardener, annoyed. 'I learnt from my master that all machines have to do with formulae, artificiality. Now formulae and artifices destroy native ingenuity, trouble the vital spirits, and prevent the Principle from residing peacefully in one's heart. I want nothing of your counterbalanced ladle.' - Silenced, Zi Gong lowered his head and did not reply. In his turn the gardener asked: 'Who are you?' - 'A Confucian,

said Zi Gong. - 'Ah,' said the gardener, 'one of those pedants who think they are superior to the common people, and who try to make themselves interesting by singing complaints about the bad state of the empire. Go! Forget your mind, forget your body, and you will take the first step along the road to wisdom. For, if you cannot put yourself aright, how can you claim to set aright the empire? Clear off, now! You have made me lose enough time.' - Zi Gong went away, pale with emotion. He did not recover until after he had covered thirty li. Then the disciples who accompanied him asked: 'What kind of man is he to have troubled you so?' - 'Ah,' said Zi Gong, 'until now I believed that there was in the empire but a single man worthy of his name, my master Confucius. That was because I did not know this man. I explained to him the Confucian theory, of the tendency towards the goal, by the most fitting means and with the least effort. I took that for the formula of wisdom. Now he has refuted me and has given me to understand that wisdom consists of integration of the vital spirits, conservation of one's nature, and union with the Principle. These true Sages do not differ from the common people exteriorly; interiorly their distinctive trait is the absence of goal, letting life unfold without wanting to know where it is going. All effort, tendency, art, is for them the result of having forgotten what man should be. According to them, the True Man only moves under his natural instinct. He scorns praise and blame equally, which neither give him benefit nor deprive him. That is true wisdom, whereas I am buffeted about by the wind and the waves.' - When he returned to the Principality of Lu, Zi Gong, converted to Daoism, recounted his adventure to Confucius. The latter said: 'This man claims to practise the wisdom of the primordial age. He holds himself to the principle, to the formula, affecting ignorance of applications and modifications. Certainly, if in the present world there were still a means of living without thinking and without acting, attending uniquely to one's own well-being, there would be grounds for admiring him. But we are born, you and I, in a century of intrigues and struggles, where the wisdom of the primordial age is no longer worth studying, for it is no longer applicable.'

L. Zhun Mang was going towards the eastern ocean, when he met Yuan Feng, who said to him: 'Master, where are you going?' - 'To the sea,' said Zhun Mang. - 'Why?' asked Yuan Feng. - 'Because it is the image of the Principle,' said Zhun Mang. 'All the rivers run into it without filling it. Water leaves it without emptying it; just as beings leave the Principle and return to it. That is why I am going to the sea.' - 'And what do you think of humanity?' asked Yuan Feng. 'What are the politics of the lesser Sages, the Confucians?' - Zhun Mang answered: 'They are to do good to all, favour the talented, rule the empire, and make the people

obey, these are their politics.' - 'And the politics of the Daoist Sages, who collaborate with the cosmic influx?' asked Yuan Feng. - 'They are,' said Zhun Mang, 'not to make plans; to act under the inspiration of the moment; to count as nothing the artificial distinctions of right and wrong, good and evil; to give to everyone as one would give to orphans, waifs, and strays, in order to satisfy their needs, without expecting any return, without asking thanks of them, without even making oneself known.' - 'And the politics of wholly superior transcendent men?' asked Yuan Feng. - 'The latter,' said Zhun Mang, 'fuse their spirit with the light, and their body with the universe. Their luminosity and emptiness is the total abnegation of the self. Submitted to their destiny, these men enjoy the disinterested joy of heaven and earth, practising non-intervention without love or hate, so that all goes spontaneously to its natural solution. Governed by them, all beings would return to their inborn instinct, and the world to its primordial state.'

**M.** Men Wu Gui and Chi Zhang Man Ji had watched Emperor Yu's army march past them. Man Ji said: 'If this emperor were as good as old Shun, he wouldn't have to make war.' - 'Did Shun reign during a troubled or a peaceful epoch?' asked Wu Gui. - 'You are right,' said Man Ji; 'there are no grounds for comparison. Shun reigned during an epoch so peaceful that anyone could have passed himself off as emperor. He wasted his time over trifles, such as curing ulcers, restoring hair, and caring for the sick. He drugged the empire with all the anxiety of a son who drugs his father.' The Confucians praise him for his actions. A true Sage would have been ashamed to act like that... At the time of perfect action, they made no special case of wisdom or ability. Governments were like the branches of great trees, which sheltered and protected without knowing or wishing to know it; the people were like wild animals who took refuge under these branches and benefited from their shade, without thanking them. The governments acted equitably without knowing the word equity, charitably without knowing the word goodness, loyally and faithfully, simply, and without asking for payment in return. In view of their extreme simplicity, no striking facts have come down from these times, and their history has not been written.

**N.** A son, a minister, who does not approve of an evil deed committed by his father or prince, is proclaimed a good son, a good minister, by the people, from authority, without argument; and the masses adopt this verdict docilely, each one believing he has pronounced it himself\*. If one says to these people, that their

\*Although this is not, however, evident, for one could claim that the height of piety and devotion is to approve of everything, even evil, says the commentary.

judgement is not their own, that it has been suggested to them, they will be offended. It is like this in most cases, for most people. Almost all of them receive their ideas already made, and follow popular opinion all their lives. They speak in the style of the times, and dress according to fashion, not from any principle, but in order to act like the others. Servile imitators, who say yes or no according to suggestion, they believe themselves to be self-determining. Is this not folly? An incurable folly, for men are sure that they are not caught up in this mania for imitation. It is a general folly, for the whole empire is touched with this madness. It would therefore be in vain for me to try to put men back on the way of spontaneous personal action, emanating from the self, from their own instinct. Alas! - Noble music leaves villagers indifferent, whereas a trivial song easily makes them swoon. Likewise, elevated thoughts do not enter minds stuffed with common ideas. The noise of two earthenware drums drowns the sound of a bronze bell. How could I make the fools who populate the empire listen to me? If I hoped to achieve that, I also would be a fool. Therefore I leave them alone, without attempting to enlighten them. None of them, moreover, wish me to, for they cling to their common folly. Just like the leper who only caresses his new-born son after he has assured himself that he is just as leprous as he.

O. Take a living tree from which a branch has been cut. From a part of this branch a ritual vase is made, chiselled and painted; and the rest is thrown into the rubbish pit to decay. Then they will say the vase is beautiful and the rest is ugly. And I say, both the vase and the rest are ugly for they are no longer natural wood, but artificially deformed objects. I judge brigand Zhi, and the Sages Zeng Shen and Shi Qiu, in the same way. The first is said to be vicious, the others virtuous. In my eyes they were equally wrong for not being true men, for they acted against nature, and therefore it matters little if it was with good or evil intentions. - And what are the causes of this ruin of human nature? They are the artificial theories of colour, which have perverted sight; theories of sound, which have perverted hearing; theories of odour, which have perverted the sense of smell; theories of taste, which have perverted taste; and literary artifices, which have distracted the heart of man and falsified his nature. Look at these enemies of human nature, so dear to Yang Zhu and Mo Zi. I shall never consider the arts as good things. Strangling, imprisoning, artificial rules; how can they make people happy? Should the ideal of happiness be the state of the dove locked in a cage, or that of the dove free in the air? Poor people, their theories torment their interior like fire, their rites truss their exterior like a corset. Thus tortured and bound, should I compare them with criminals in the tongs, or with encaged wild animals? Is this happiness?

## Chapter 13. Heavenly Influence.

A. The influence of heaven acts freely, producing all beings. The imperial influence, acting impartially, draws all the people to it. The Sage's influence spreads uniformly, and everyone submits to him. Those who understand this mode of action of heaven, of the Sage, and of the ideal head of state, concentrate themselves in meditative peace, which is the source of natural action. This peace is not an objective, which the Sage reaches by direct efforts. It consists in the negative fact that his heart is no longer moved by anything; it is acquired through abstraction. This is the principle of the Sage's clear insight. Just as perfectly calm water is clear and reflects even the hairs of the beard and eyebrows of one who looks in it. Nothing tends more towards rest, towards equilibrium, than water; so much so that the name of the perfect grade (level of water) is derived from it. Now just as rest clarifies water, it likewise clarifies the vital spirits, including the intelligence. The Sage's heart, perfectly calm, is like a mirror which reflects heaven and earth, and all beings. Emptiness, peace, contentment, apathy, silence, comprehensive view, non-intervention; these make the formula of the influence of heaven and earth, of the Principle. The ancient emperors and Sages knew this formula. Empty (of all passion), they kept the general laws truthfully. Peaceful (without any emotion), they acted effectively. Not intervening, leaving details to their officials, they were exempt from pleasure and pain, and, in consequence, they lived a long time. Is it not clear that emptiness, peace, contentment, apathy, silence, comprehensive view, non-intervention, are the root of all good? He who understands this could be as good an emperor as Yao, and as good a minister as Shun. He could reign, as king, over the destiny of men; or as a Sage, over their spiritual well-being. Whether he lives in retreat as an anchorite by the waters, in the mountains, or in the forests, or happens to be a world teacher, in each case he will be recognized and attract people to him. Yes, the speculations of the great Sages, and the actions of the great kings, emanate from peace; non-intervention makes them famous; abstraction elevates them above everything. Understand clearly the influence of heaven and earth, which is a kindly and tolerant non-intervention; it is the great root, the understanding with heaven. The principle of having such an understanding with men is practising an analogous non-intervention in government. Now human joy, supreme happiness, is living in harmony with men. *Zhuang Zi praises his ideal, emptiness, rest, the Principle, saying: 'O my Master! My Master! You destroy without being evil, construct without being good, were before time but are not old, cover all like the sky, support all like the earth, and are the author of all without claiming to be able (unconscious action). It is heavenly joy to understand you thus. It*

is supreme happiness to know that I was born through your influence, that on my death I will enter into your way; that resting I communicate with the yin, your passive modality, acting I communicate with the yang, your active modality. For the enlightened who possess this happiness, no more complaints against heaven (the intelligent intermediary of destiny), no more resentment against men (who go their way as I do), no more worry about business (which isn't worth it), no more fear of ghosts (who can do nothing). The action of the enlightened is confounded with heaven's action, his rest with earth's repose. His closed spirit dominates the world; in death his inferior soul will not act badly (will dissipate itself peacefully), his superior soul will not wander as a ghost (will pass into another form). Yes, this is heavenly joy, to follow the evolution of the Principle, in heaven, earth, and all beings. This joy is the subsoil of the Sage's heart. He draws his principle of government from this.'

**B.** Faithful imitators of heaven and earth, of the Principle and its influence, the ancient rulers did not intervene directly or occupy themselves with details. It was because of this that they were able to govern the whole empire. Inactive, they let their subjects act. Immobile, they let men move themselves. Their thought extended to everything, without their thinking of anything; they saw everything in principle, without distinguishing details; their power, capable of anything, was applied to nothing. Just as the non-action of heaven and earth causes beings to be born and grow; so the ruler's non-action makes his subjects prosper. How transcendent is the influence of heaven, earth, and such a ruler. And there is reason for saying, in this sense, that the ruler's influence unites itself with that of heaven and earth! Indefinable like that of heaven and earth, it attracts all beings and moves the mass of humans. - Unique in its superior sphere, this influence spreads itself as it descends. The ruler formulates the abstract law; his ministers apply it to concrete cases. Military art, laws and sanctions, rites and customs, music and dances, weddings and funerals, and other things which torment the Confucians; all these are minute details, which the Sage leaves to his officials. - One must not think, however, that there are, in human affairs, neither degrees nor subordination, nor succession. There is a natural order, based on the reciprocal relationship of heaven and earth, and on cosmic evolution. The ruler is superior to the minister, father to son, older to younger brothers, old people to young people, man to woman, husband to wife; because heaven is superior to earth. In the cycle of the seasons, the two productive seasons precede the two unproductive ones; each being passes through two successive phases of vigour and decline; all this comes from the fact of cosmic evolution; and it follows that parents have precedence in

the family, rank comes first at court, the old are honoured in the village, the wisest are entrusted in human affairs. To lack these things, would be to lack respect for the Principle, from which these rules have been derived.

C. The ancients considered the Principle in the heaven-earth binomial. It is from this binomial that they drew the natural ideas of (blind) goodness and (unconscious) fairness, (opposed to the artificial ideas of goodness and fairness of the Confucians); then the ideas of functions and office; and then those of capacity, responsibility, sanction etc. As abstract ideas increased, intellectuals distinguished themselves from imbeciles; then there were superior and inferior men. All were treated according to their degree. The Sages served the ruler, nurtured the foolish, amending them by example, without constraining them, like the action of heaven and earth. This was the era of absolute peace, of perfect government. No one made dissertations, or quibbled about entities and denominations, as do the sophists today. They did not try to reward or punish adequately every good or evil deed, as our legalists would like to. For every solution, they inquired into the root, the origin, the Principle which contains all; and it is this view from above, which made the superiority of their government. Whereas through being lost in details, our sophists and legalists are good-for-nothing.

D. When Shun was still a minister, he asked Yao: 'Emperor appointed by heaven, how do you exercise your functions?' Yao replied: 'I do not oppress the little ones, I do not wrong the poor, I take care of widows and orphans.' - 'That is good,' said Shun, 'but it is hardly elevated.' - 'Then,' asked Yao, 'what should I do?' - 'The influence of heaven,' said Shun, 'pacifies through its own emanation. To produce the succession of seasons, days and nights, clouds and rain, the sun and moon are content to shine.' - 'I understand,' said Yao, 'I have acted too much, and tried too hard to please.'

E. Confucius was leaving the Principality of Lu, in the east, for the capital of Zhou (then Lao Yang) in the west. He wished to present his books to the imperial library. His disciple Zi Lu said to him: 'I have heard tell that a certain Lao Dan used to be keeper of this library. He is retired now. Pay him a visit. He could help you get your books accepted.' 'So be it,' said Confucius; and he went to see Lao Dan. The latter refused outright to patronize his books. To coax him, Confucius began by expounding the contents to him. - 'Not so much verbiage,' said Lao Dan; 'tell me, in two words, what they are about.' - 'Goodness and fairness,' said Confucius. - 'Ah,' said Lao Dan. 'Are they about natural goodness and fairness?' - 'But yes,' said Confucius; 'of those which make man.' - 'Then go on and define them,' said Lao Dan. - 'To love all beings and to



treat them well, without egoism, that is goodness and fairness,' said Confucius. - 'And you preach that, being yourself ambitious and egoistical,' said Lao Dan. 'Master, if you truly wish good for the empire, begin by studying the invariable influence of heaven and earth, the constant illumination of the sun and the moon, the perfect order of the stars, the stability of animal and vegetable species; observe that everything in nature is continuation and uniformity, and that the Principle penetrates all with its peaceful influence. You, also, should unite your influence with that of the Principle, and you could get somewhere. Cease wanting to introduce your ideas and virtues by force; they are artificial and against nature... A man whose son had run away had the drum beaten as a signal to begin a man-hunt, instead of seeking to bring him back gently. The result was that the fugitive went so far away that he could never be found again. Your efforts to bring back, to the beating of drums, goodness and fairness to the world, will, I fear, have the same negative result. Master, you cause what is left of nature to flee away.'

F. Shi Cheng Qi went to find Lao Zi, and said to him: 'Having heard that you are a Sage, I have made a long journey to come and see you. I have walked for a hundred days, getting callosities on the soles of my feet, and now I find that you are not a Sage. For you keep the left-overs from your meals indefinitely; you have ill-treated your sister, because the rats have stolen the left-over vegetables' (which she could have eaten). - Lao Zi looked on absent-mindedly, letting him speak and making no reply. - The next day, Shi Cheng Qi returned to Lao Zi's house and said to him: 'Yesterday I blamed you. Your silence has made me reflect. Please excuse me for yesterday.' - 'I am no more impressed by your excuses than by your blames,' said Lao Zi. 'I have delivered myself from all desire to be called learned, transcendent, wise. You could treat me as a cow or a horse and I would not reply. Whether what they say is true or false, letting men speak, spares one the trouble of replying. It is my principle always to let men speak as they will. My silence of yesterday was an application of it.' - Shi Cheng Qi walked around Lao Zi, avoiding treading on his shadow; then, presenting himself before him, asked him what he should do to amend himself. Lao Zi rebuffed him with these words: 'Counterfeit being, of whom all the airs and graces denote untamed passions and lawless intentions, how can you claim to impose yourself on me and make me believe that you desire, and are capable of, culture? Go! I have no more confidence in you than in any single one of the frontier brigands.'

G. Lao Zi said: 'Infinite in itself, the Principle penetrates the smallest of beings through its virtue. All are full of it. Immense in

its extension, deeply profound, it embraces all and cannot be fathomed. All sentient beings and their qualities, all abstractions such as goodness and fairness, are ramifications of the Principle, but derived, far-off. The superior man understands this. Confucius, a common Sage, is wrong on this point. Thus, when he governs, the superior man does not encumber himself with these details, and in consequence the government of the world only weighs lightly on him. He only occupies himself with the tiller, and avoids any contact with affairs. From above, his glance dominates everything. No particular interest touches him. He inquires only into the essence of things. He lets heaven and earth, and all beings, act, without the slightest mental fatigue, because he is without passion. Having penetrated as far as the Principle and identified his action with its action, he rejects artificial goodness and fairness, conventional rites and music. For his mind is dominated by a unique and fixed idea, not to intervene, to allow nature and time to act.'

**H.** In the present world the vogue is for books (anthologies of Confucius). Books are only collections of words. Words form ideas. Now true ideas are derived from a principle beyond the realm of sensibility, and they can scarcely be explained any better in words. The formulae which fill the books only explain conventional ideas which correspond little or not to the nature of things, to the truth. Those who know the nature of things, do not try to explain it in words; and those who try, show thereby, that they do not know. The common people are mistaken in seeking the truth in books; they only contain false ideas.

**I.** One day, whilst Duke Huan of Qi was reading, seated in the great hall, Pian the wheelwright was making a wheel in the courtyard. Suddenly, putting down his hammer and chisel, he climbed the stairs, approached the duke, and asked him: 'What are you reading there?' - 'The words of the Sages,' replied the duke. - 'Of living Sages?' asked Pian. - 'Of dead Sages,' said the duke. 'Ah,' said Pian, 'the detritus of the ancients.' - Irritated, the duke said to him: 'Wheelwright, what right have you to interfere? Explain yourself quickly, or I will have you put to death.' - 'I will explain as a man of my craft,' replied the wheelwright. 'When I make a wheel, if I go gently, the result is weak; if I go strongly, the result is massive; if I go without thinking of what I am doing, the result conforms to my ideal of a good and beautiful wheel; I cannot define this method for it is a knack which cannot be explained; so much so that I have not been able to explain it to my son, and at the age of seventy, to have a good wheel I still have to make it myself. Were the ancient defunct Sages, whose books you read, able to do better than I? Could they write down their knack, their genius? If not, their books contain only the refuse of their departed spirit.'

Chapter 14. Natural Evolution.

**A.** The starry heaven turns, the earth is fixed. The sun and moon alternate with each other. Who governs all this? Who maintains this harmony? Where is the motionless motor that moves everything? Is the cosmic movement free or forced?... Clouds resolve themselves into rain, and the rain, evaporated, forms again into clouds. Who distributes abundance and well-being thus, without moving?... From the north, the wind blows towards the west, towards the east, in all directions. Who moves this powerful breath? Who, immobile, imparts these variations to it?... 'I am going to tell you,' said Wuxian Tiao. 'It is heaven, by the revolution of the five elements, in the six regions of space. It is this revolution that maintains order in nature; and in human affairs, if the government conforms to it, there will be good order, and disorder if it does not. When the ancient sovereigns applied their nine laws\*, their government was prosperous and effective. They enlightened the empire, which submitted to them perfectly. They are called the August Sovereigns.'

**B.** Tang, the prime minister of Shang, asked Zhuang Zi: 'What is goodness?'... The latter said: 'It is the virtue of tigers and wolves.' - 'How so?' said Tang. - 'Don't tigers and wolves love their little ones?' said Zhuang Zi. - 'And supreme goodness?' said Tang. - 'Supreme goodness,' replied Zhuang Zi, 'consists in not loving.' - 'Then,' said Tang, 'the man who possesses supreme goodness will be deprived of filial piety.' - 'No,' said Zhuang Zi. 'Supreme goodness is undifferentiated, total and abstract, but it is not contrary to any specific benevolence. It is to love from so high, from so far, that the object is lost to sight. Thus when one looks from Ying, one cannot see the Min Shan Mountains in the north. They are there, however - an effect of distance. - For filial piety to approach supreme goodness, the son must love without envisaging his parents, and the parents must love him without envisaging him also. Loving all the empire without thinking of it, and being loved by it without being known to it, approaches even more towards supreme goodness. Being more benevolent than Yao or Shun without taking account of it, doing good to all without anyone suspecting it, is supreme goodness, similar to the unconscious influence of heaven and earth, which causes everything to evolve spontaneously. To understand this, it is not sufficient just to value filial piety... No doubt virtues such as filial and fraternal piety, ordinary goodness and fairness, fidelity and loyalty, righteousness and constancy, enter in a way into supreme goodness, but they are clearly small in comparison with its grandeur. It is said that

\*Of the Great Rule. See Annales, Tcheou, ch. 4; Textes Philosophiques, p. 25.

ornaments add nothing to one who has every beauty; monetary gifts add nothing to one who has all wealth; no distinction whatever adds anything to one who has all honours. Therefore he who possesses absolute goodness, which is none other than the Principle, will, as the occasion demands, practise any particular goodness of an inferior order, but without it adding anything to him. And it is not by starting from these details, that one can clearly define, inductively, supreme goodness; it is better to define it deductively, starting from the Principle.'

C. Biemen Cheng said to the Yellow Emperor: 'When I listened to the performance of your Xian Chi symphony near Lake Dong Ting, the first part made me afraid, the second made me dizzy, the third gave me a sensation of vagueness from which I have still not recovered.' - 'That is as it should be,' said the emperor. 'This symphony contains everything. It is a human expression of heavenly action, of universal evolution. - The first part expresses the contrast of terrestrial facts which come under heavenly influence; the struggle of the five elements, the succession of the four seasons; birth and decay of plant life; action and reaction of heavy and light, light and darkness, sound and silence; the renewal of animal life in springtime, to the sound of thunder, after the winter torpor; the institution of human laws, civil and military offices, etcetera. All abruptly, with neither introductions nor transitions; in shocking sounds, a suite of dissonances, like the chain of births and deaths, of the appearance and disappearance of ephemeral earthly things. It should have made you afraid. - The second part of the symphony renders, in soft or loud, prolonged and drawn out, sounds, the continuity of the action of the yin and the yang, of the course of the two great luminaries, of the arrival of the living and the departure of the dead. It is this suite, continuing until it fades away, that made you dizzy by its infinitude, to the point that, no longer knowing where you were, you clung to a tree trunk, gasping with vertigo and anxiety caused by the void. - The third part of the symphony expresses the productions of nature, the unfolding of destinies. Hence the effervescence followed by calm; the murmur of the great forests, then a mysterious silence. For that is how beings are born, coming, in streams and waves, from an unknown origin, and leaving for an unknown destination. The Sage alone can understand this harmony, for he alone understands nature and destiny. Heavenly joy, which is felt but cannot be explained, consists in grasping the threads of becoming, before being, whilst they are still held by the craft of cosmic weaving. It consists, as Master Yen has chanted, in hearing that which has not yet any sound, seeing that which has not yet any form, which fills heaven and earth, and embraces space, the Principle, the motor of cosmic evolution. Not knowing that,

you remained vague. My explanations have made you pass from this vagueness to the knowledge of the Principle. Guard this well.'

**D.** Whilst Confucius was travelling to the west of the Principality of Wei, his disciple Yen Yuan asked the master musician Jin: 'What do you think of my master's future?' - 'I think,' said Master Jin, with a sigh, 'that he will get nowhere.' - 'Why?' said Yen Yuan. - 'Look,' said Jin, 'at the straw dogs used as offerings\*. Before the offering they are conserved in boxes, wrapped in beautiful cloths, whilst they are purified through prayer and abstinence. After the offering they are thrown away, trampled on, burnt. If they were put back in the boxes to be used a second time, everyone in the house would be tormented by nightmares, these filters of bad influence disgorging the ill-fated influences they have taken up. Now Confucius collects together in his school the straw dogs of the sovereigns of antiquity (his out of date books full of souvenirs, which have become ill-omened). This is the cause of his persecution; nightmares which his old straw dogs have procured for him. - On water, one takes a boat; on land, one takes a carriage; it is impossible to travel on water in a carriage, or on land in a boat. Now the ancient times are to the present like water and land; the Zhou Empire and the Duchy of Lu may be likened to a boat and a carriage. To wish now to apply the outdated principles of the ancients, to wish to employ in the Duchy of Lu the procedures of the Zhou Empire is wishing to travel by boat on dry land, attempting the impossible. Confucius works in vain and draws misfortune to himself, like all those who have attempted to apply a given system in different circumstances. - In our days, to raise water, the ancient people's bucket has been abandoned for the counterbalanced ladle, and no one feels a need to return to the bucket. Thus the ancient emperors' methods of government, which were apt in their times and are now out of date, should not now be imposed by force. In each season one eats certain fruits, which taste good at that time, whereas they would not be so good at another time. It is the same for laws and customs; they must vary according to the times. - Dress up a monkey in the Duke of Zhou's robe. What will happen? He will tear it up in anger, with his teeth and nails, and will only rest peacefully when the last bit is torn away. Now antiquity and the present differ as much as the Duke of Zhou and a monkey. Do not try to dress the moderns in the ancient's cast off clothing. - Once, when the beautiful Xi Shi had her tantrums she was even more seductive. A most unseemly woman, who had seen her in this state, one day did the same thing. The result was that the rich inhabitants of the village barricaded themselves in their houses, and the poor fled terrified with their women and children. The ugly one had only reproduced the furores, not the beauty, of Xi Shi. So it is

\*And at funerals. See Lao Zi chapter 5.

for the parody Confucius gives us of antiquity, it makes men run away. This man will not succeed.'

E. At the age of fifty Confucius still had no idea of the Principle. Therefore he went to Pei and visited Lao Dan. - 'Ah! There you are,' said the latter. 'Is that you, the Sage of the North? What do you know of the Principle?' - 'Nothing,' said Confucius. - 'Then,' said Lao Dan, 'why don't you look for it?' - 'I have searched for five whole years, in the formulae and numbers, without finding it,' said Confucius. - 'And then?' asked Lao Dan. - 'Then,' said Confucius, 'I looked for it during twelve whole years, in the yin and the yang, equally without result.' - 'That does not surprise me,' said Lao Dan. 'If the Principle could be found in that way, it would long since have figured amongst the presents which friends give to each other. Knowledge of the Principle cannot be found, nor communicated, so easily. It requires a man to be perfect ruler of himself. You should not seek an exclusive monopoly of reputation, to which so many have a claim, nor of the ideas of goodness and fairness, which have already served so many in the past. You should only take your share of these things, in your turn. Otherwise everyone will turn against you, for they seek their share also. The ancients monopolized nothing. They held to one thing only, freedom to wander in the void, to speculate without fetters, to have neither attachments nor affairs. That is how they came to knowledge of the Principle, through this detachment. Whoever is tied by the love of wealth, glory, or power, is too distracted even to turn towards it. And, as for government, which should consist in following exactly the movement of natural evolution, only those who are straight are capable of correcting others. As for he who claims to correct others, without being straight himself, one can only say that the light of reason has not yet dawned in him\*.'

F. Another time, Confucius went to visit Lao Dan, and explained his ideas on goodness and fairness to him. 'Listen,' said the latter, 'winnowers cannot see because of the dust; when mosquitoes are legion, one cannot relax. Your discourse on goodness and fairness has an analogous effect on me; I am blinded, maddened by it. Go! Leave the people in peace. Believe whatever you will, in theory; but in practice, bend with the wind, accept the changes that have come upon the world, do not beat the drum to recall the runaway son (what is left of antiquity; compare with chapter 13E). Wild geese are naturally white, crows are naturally black; no dissertation will change this fact. It is the same for successive periods of

\*So many blows to the ambitious and intriguing Confucius, who claimed alone to have the secret of goodness and fairness; who sought to monopolize, for himself and his disciples, the government of fiefs and the empire; etc.

time. Your discourses will not make today's crows change into yesterday's geese. You will not save what is left of the ancient world; its time has come. When the rivers dry up, the fish come together in the holes, and seek to save their lives by mutually smearing themselves with the mucus which covers them. Poor things! They should have scattered in time and found the deeper waters.' - After this visit, Confucius said nothing for three days. His disciples asked him at last: 'Master, how did you refute Lao Dan?' - 'I saw the dragon personified in that man,' said Confucius. 'The dragon coils up visibly, then extends itself invisibly, producing cloudy or clear weather, without anyone being able to understand its powerful but mysterious action. I remained open mouthed in front of that unfathomable man. He has too much breadth for me. What could I say to refute him?'

G. 'Then,' said the disciple Zi Gong, 'could this man be the Sage who is said to be retired and silent, extending his influence everywhere, powerful as thunder, profound like an abyss, and acting like heaven and earth? Will you permit me to visit him?' - With the permission of Confucius, Zi Gong went to find Lao Dan. The latter looked him up and down, and said: 'I am quite old and you are very young! What do you wish to learn from me?' - Zi Gong said: 'The three great emperors and the five great kings did not govern in the same manner, it is true, but everyone calls them Sages. Why do you alone refuse them this title?' 'Approach, my boy, so that I may see you more closely,' said old Lao Dan. 'You say they did not govern in the same way?' - 'There is no doubt about that,' said Zi Gong. 'Yao abdicated. Shun nominated Yu his successor. Yu and Tang made war. King Wen ceded to the tyrant Zhou, who, on the contrary, was overthrown by Cheng Wang. Are these not differences?' - 'Come closer, my boy, so that I may see you better,' said Lao Dan. 'Is that all you know about history? Then listen! - The Yellow Emperor organized his people into an empire, and in so far as he did that, he wounded nature; but he laughed at the rest, even at what Confucius takes as most essential, such as mourning one's dead parents; in his time, no one could care less whether anyone performed rites or not. - Yao constrained the people to the rites of mourning for parents, but he laughed at the rest. - Shun pushed for reproduction. By order, women had to have a child every ten months; the children had to speak at the age of five months, and know their fellow citizens before the age of three. He overworked them and introduced premature deaths into the world. - Yu completely perverted the heart of man. He legalized murder, by declaring that, in war, one killed brigands, not men, and that this was not evil. Then he took possession of the empire for the benefit of his family (made it hereditary). Since then, disorder has grown worse and worse. It reached its highest pitch when the Confucians

and Mo-ists appeared, inventing so-called social relations, laws of marriage, etcetera. - And you say that the ancients governed the empire. No, they turned it upside-down. Through their innovations, they ruined the base of all stability, the strong influence of the sun and the moon, the mountains and rivers, and the four seasons. Their artificial know-how has been more deadly than the sting of a scorpion or the teeth of a wild beast. Surely these men, who failed to recognize the laws of nature and human destiny, showed too little modesty in claiming the title of Sages.' - In front of this sortie of Lao Dan, Zi Gong remained with his mouth open, ill at ease.

H. Confucius said to Lao Dan: 'I have given careful attention to the Odes, Annals, Rites and Music, the Mutations, and the Chronicle. I have applied myself at length to the study of these six treatises, and I have familiarized myself with them. I have spoken before seventy-two lawless princes, expounding the principles of the ancient sovereigns, of Dukes Zhou and Shao, for their amendment. Not one of them has benefited from my discourses. It is difficult to persuade such people.' - 'How fortunate,' said Lao Zi, 'that none of them listened to you! If they had done so, they would have become worse. Your six treatises are out of date, stories of things that happened in circumstances that no longer exist, of actions which would now be out of place... What can one deduce from a footprint, except that it was made by a foot? The imprint is dumb to questions of who, why, how, and other circumstances. It is the same for imprints left by the facts of history; they do not teach us the true and living reality as it was. - Each time has its own nature, just as each being has its own; a nature which cannot be changed. Herons mate by looking at each other, certain insects by buzzing, others are hermaphrodite, others do otherwise. Each should be left to act naturally. Nature and destiny do not change, time cannot be stopped, evolution cannot be obstructed. Let everything follow its natural course, and you will have nothing but success. Run counter to things, and you will have nothing but failure.' - Confucius confined himself at home for three months, in order to meditate on this lesson. Then he went to see Lao Zi, and said: 'I've got it! Crows and magpies brood, fish impregnate their spawn, the sphex is born by transformation from a spider; men have successive children, the birth of each younger brother making the elder cry. For a long time I have kept away from natural evolution, and even tried to make things go backwards. That is why I have failed to make humanity evolve.' - 'Good,' said Lao Zi, 'you have found the key.'



Chapter 15. Wisdom And Incrustation.

**A.** Having ideas encrusted in their minds and a high opinion of their singular ways; breaking with the world and forming a separate group; speaking haughtily and criticizing others; in a word, behaving like pedants; these are the ones who live as anchorites on the mountains and in the valleys, showing contempt for the common way, and ending up dying of starvation or drowning in some torrent. - Discoursing on goodness and fairness, loyalty and fidelity; practising respect for others, simplicity, modesty, in a word constraining themselves in everything; these are the ones who try to pacify the world and take men to task, masters of ambulant or sedentary schools. - Exalting their merits, working to make a name for themselves, quibbling about rites and etiquette, wanting to regulate everything; these are the ones who frequent the courts, politicians seeking to serve a master, organize a principality, or mediate alliances. - Retiring to lake shores or solitary places, fishing with a line, or doing nothing; that is what lovers of nature or idleness do. - Breathing in time, evacuating the air contained in the lungs and replacing it with fresh air, aiding their breathing by gestures similar to those of a climbing bear or a bird in flight; these are the ones who aspire to live a long time, imitators of Peng Zu. - All these are crazy. Let us speak now of serious men.

**B.** Having elevated aspirations, without preconceived ideas; tending towards perfection, but not following the scheme of goodness-fairness; governing without seeking to make a name; not retiring from the world; living without practising respiratory gymnastics; having everything, and making no special case of anything; attracting everyone, without doing anything; that is the way of heaven and earth, which the Daoist Sage follows. - Emptiness, peace, contentment, apathy, silence, total view, non-intervention\*; this is the formula of heaven and earth, the secret of the Principle and its virtue. The Daoist Sage acts like that. Peaceful, simple, disinterested, no sadness troubles his heart; he is moved neither by covetousness nor lust, his conduct is perfect, and his vital spirit remains intact. Throughout his life he acts like heaven, at his death he enters the great transformation. In sleep he communicates by the mode yin, in movement by the mode yang, of the universe. He causes neither happiness nor evil to others. He only acts when he is constrained to do so, when he cannot do otherwise. He rejects all science, tradition, precedent. In everything, he imitates the indifferent opportunism of heaven. Therefore he has nothing to suffer, from heaven, beings, men, or phantoms. During life he sails at the will of events, at death he stops. He does not think of the future, and does not make plans. He shines without glare or

\*Cf. chapter 13 A.

dazzle; he is faithful without being bound. During sleep, he does not suffer from dreams, awake he is not melancholy. His vital spirit is always well-disposed, and his soul is always ready to act. Empty, peaceful, content, simple, he communes with heavenly virtue. - Happiness and sadness are equally vices, affection and resentment are both excesses; he who loves or hates has lost his equilibrium. The height of virtue is knowing neither pleasure nor displeasure; the height of peace is being always the same, without changing; the height of emptiness is holding on to nothing; the height of apathy is having no attachments to anyone; the height of disinterestedness is letting go, practising non-intervention. - Incessant muscular fatigue and activity wears one out. Look at the water. Its nature is pure and calm. It is only impure or agitated when it has been disturbed by violent means. It is the perfect image of heavenly virtue, calm spontaneity. The vital spirit is preserved through purity without mixture; repose without alteration; apathy without action; movement conformed to that of heaven, unconscious, without dispensation of thought or effort. - The owner of an excellent sword from Gan Yue keeps it carefully wrapped in a fur, and only uses it on special occasions, out of fear that he might wear it out in vain. It is a strange thing that the majority of men go to less trouble to look after their vital spirit, which is more precious than the best blade from Gan Yue. Now this principle of life belongs everywhere, from heaven above to earth below, to the transformations of all beings, confounding its action with that of the Sovereign (the cosmic Sovereign, soul of the world). Integrity and purity, is what preserves the soul and prevents it from being worn out. In its state of integrity and purity, it communicates with the celestial rule (synonym of the cosmic Sovereign). From this come the following sayings: 'The common people esteem fortune, the educated reputation and positions, the Sage the integrity of his vital spirit. The principle of life is the purity and integrity which preserves it. Purity implies absence of mixture, integrity means absence of all defects. He whose vital spirit is perfectly integrated and pure, is a True Man.'

**Chapter 16. Nature And Convention.**

**A.** Trying to restore nature to its original state, by the studies that are undertaken in the present-day schools; wishing to regulate people's inclinations by enlightening them with classical reasoning, shows a great blindness. The ancient Sages knew of science only that it emanated spontaneously from the calm of their nature, a simple sensing of things, which did not trouble them. Their natural reason, derived from the Principle, functioned normally in their interior peace. Thus these quite simple notions were born: Goodness, supporting everything; fairness, being reasonable. From fairness came loyalty; the frank truth produced joy and its expression in music; mutual confidence produced politeness and its expression in the rites. Later on, rites and music became falsified, an element of perversion, which is what happens to everything that no longer conforms with nature. - Right at the beginning men were simple and natural. There were no disorders from natural physical forces. The course of the seasons was regular so that no one suffered, and there were no premature deaths, theories, or sciences. That was the age of perfect unity and union, of men with each other, and with nature. No one interfered with the natural order and everything followed its course spontaneously. - However decadence came. It began with the institutions of Sui Ren and Fu Xi (artificial production of fire, laws of family and marriage) which seemed to be a progress but which inaugurated the ruin of the primordial simplicity and promiscuity. Decadence increased at the time of Shen Nong and the Yellow Emperor (abandoning of nomadic life for agriculture, and formation of the state). Well-being increased, but at the expense of the ancient spontaneity. The decadence increased further when Yao and Shun reigned, introducing systematic correction (through laws and schools) and the obligatory practice of a conventional so-called goodness. The period of primitive ways was finished. Since then men have substituted theories in place of their inborn instinct, and peace has disappeared from the empire. Now the progress of the arts and sciences has done away with what remained of natural simplicity, and people's minds have been filled with distractions. Now everything is disorder and perversion.

**B.** From this historical review, it follows that the adoption of conventional ways has been the ruin of primitive ways, and this ruin of primordial nature has been the ruin of the world. Nature and convention are two irreconcilable contradictions. The followers of these two ways cannot live in the same house together. They cannot even understand each other since they do not think or speak in the same way. A Sage of the part of nature (a Daoist) would not need to hide himself in the mountains and woods; living amongst

his fellow citizens, he would be unknown because he would not be understood. This state of things is not recent; it dates from quite a long time ago. The ancient Sages who are commonly known as the hidden ones, did not make themselves invisible, nor keep their mouths closed, nor deliberately hide their wisdom. They did not hide themselves. It was their complete opposition to their times that hid them, making them pass unperceived, unknown, and misunderstood. In favourable times they could perhaps have reformed the world by returning it to its lost simplicity. But since unfavourable times prevented them from doing this, they spent their lives keeping the notion of primitive perfection to themselves, and waited in peace. - These men did not look for knowledge varied by subtle differences, as do the present-day sophists; they did not wish to know all, nor to do all. Somewhat reserved, almost timid, they kept themselves in their rightful place, meditating on their nature. The subject is, moreover, sufficiently vast to occupy a man, and sufficiently difficult to require discretion. To set oneself up as a master of the doctrine of the Principle, with imperfect knowledge and conduct, would be to deny the doctrine, not to serve it. They worked therefore on their own self, taking all their happiness from their movement towards the goal. They did not dream, like the ambitious (Confucians) of our times, of grades and distinctions. What can these artificial things do for the perfection of nature? Nothing at all! They even give little satisfaction, for, being clearly precarious, he who has obtained them cannot be sure that he will keep them. The Sages are equally indifferent to fortune or distress, neither rejoicing nor being saddened by anything. When a gain makes one rejoice, when a loss saddens one, it is a sign that one likes the object, affection and sadness being two disorders. Those who show their affection to any beings whatever; who do violence to their natural instinct for no matter what convention; such people do the opposite of what they should do. They should only follow their instinct, and live absolutely detached.

## Chapter 17. The Autumn Flood.

**A.** It was the time of the autumn flood. A hundred swollen rivers poured their waters into the Yellow River, whose bed was so wide that one could not distinguish a cow from a horse on the opposite side. The sight of this pleased the Genie of the River, who said to himself that there was nothing better in the world than his domain. Following the current, he descended as far as the North Sea. At the sight of its waters, which extended eastwards without limits, he realized that there existed better domains than his, and he said with a sigh to the Genie of the Sea: 'The saying "he who knows little, thinks himself great" applies to me. I have certainly heard it said that there was better than Confucius and his heroes, but I did not believe it. Now that I have seen the extent of your empire, I begin to believe that your doctrine also is superior to that of Confucius\*. I think I have done well in coming for instruction, otherwise the truly wise would have finished by laughing at me.' - 'Welcome,' said the Genie of the Sea. 'Yes, the frog that lives at the bottom of a well has no idea of the ocean; it only knows its own hole. The mayfly hatched, and dead, by summer, does not know what ice is; it has known only one season. A limited scholar like Confucius knows nothing of the superior science of the Principle, besotted as he is with the prejudices of his cast. Having come out from your narrow bed, you have seen the ocean without limits. Convinced now of your imperfection, you have become capable of learning the superior science. Listen! - Of all the waters, the greatest is the ocean. Innumerable rivers pour their waters into it without cease, yet never augmenting it. It flows out continuously through the eastern straits, without diminishing. It neither floods nor shrinks as do the great rivers; its level is always the same, invariable. Such is my empire. Ah well, its immensity has never inspired any pride in me. Why? Because in comparison with heaven and earth, with the physical cosmos, I find it small. I feel myself to be no more than a stone or a shrub on a mountain. Being so small, why should I esteem myself? Compared with the universe, the depths of the four oceans are reduced to little holes in an immense surface. Compared with the earth, our China is reduced to dimensions proportional to that of a grain in an enormous granary. If the totality of existing beings can be expressed by the number ten thousand, humanity is worth only a single unit. Nowhere, in fact, over all the inhabited earth, does the proportion of men with reference to that of other beings, exceed this quantity. Therefore humanity is to the mass of the universe, what a hair is to the body of a horse. There you have

\*Riverside school of the Yellow River. The Genie of the Sea is Daoist. The Genie of the River is Confucian, and he is going to be converted to Daoism.

reduced to a straw, what has so occupied the ancient sovereigns, tormented the Sages, and worn out the politicians. The Confucian hero Bo Yi is reputed great for the role he played on this little scene; and Confucius is reputed wise for his rhetorical speeches about it. These men believed themselves to be something because they knew no better; just as you believed yourself to be the first amongst the aquatic genies, before you had seen the sea.'

Recalling the discussions of the sophists of his time, on the notion of great and small, the Genie of the River asked the one of the sea: 'Then from now on should I consider the universe as the expression of absolute greatness, and a hair as a symbol of absolute smallness; is that so?' - 'No,' said the Genie of the Sea, 'it is not like that. The universe existing at the present time is not the expression of absolute greatness, for its quantity is not constant. It varies with the duration of time, with the course of evolution, according to the geneses and cessations. Envisaged thus, through high science, things change their aspect, the absolute becoming relative. Thus the difference between great and small is effaced, in the vision from an infinite distance. The difference between past and present is effaced similarly, before and after disappearing in the limitless chain; and in consequence the past no longer inspires sadness and the present has no more interest. The difference between prosperity and destitution is wiped out in the same way, these ephemeral phases disappearing in the eternal evolution; and in consequence, to have, no longer causes any pleasure, to lose, no longer causes any sadness. For those who see from this distance and this height, life is no longer a happiness, death is no longer a misfortune; for they know that these phases succeed one another, and that nothing can last. Man is ignorant of many more things than he knows. Compared with the universe he is an infinitely small thing. Wishing to conclude from the little that he knows, from the little that he is, what he does not know, the universality of beings, is a process which leads him nowhere. Do not therefore, in your speculations, use the hair that you are, as a measure of smallness, or the changing cosmos as a measure of greatness.'

Satisfied to have found so good a master, the Genie of the River continued his questioning: 'The philosophers claim,' he said, 'that an extremely attenuated being becomes zero, and that the same being, extremely amplified, becomes infinite. Is that true?' - 'Yes and no,' said the Genie of the Sea. 'The notions of extreme attenuation and extreme amplification cannot be established by taking one and the same being as an example. The conceivable extreme attenuation is the abstract essence. The measurable base of amplification is concrete matter. Essence and matter are two different things, which coexist in every sentient being superior

to zero. Zero is that which calculation can no longer divide; the infinite is that which numbers can no longer embrace. The word "small" describes concrete matter; thought reaches the abstract essence. Beyond that come metaphysical intuitions, inner voices which are neither matter nor essence, and are known only through subjective appreciation. It is by following these inexplicable intuitions that the superior man does many things quite differently from the common man, but without despising the latter because he does not have the same enlightenment. These are the things that place him beyond honour and shame, reward and punishment. They are the things which make him forget the distinctions between great and small, good and bad. From all this, one may say: "The man of the Principle keeps silent; the perfect man seeks after nothing; the great man has no longer an 'I'; for he has brought all the parts together into one, an ecstatic contemplation of universal unity."

The Genie of the River having yet again insisted, in order to learn about the distinctions between noble and vile, great and small, etc., the Genie of the Sea continued: 'If one considers beings in the light of the Principle, these distinctions do not exist, all being one. In their own eyes, all beings are noble and consider others vile with reference to themselves; a subjective point of view. In the eyes of the common people, beings are noble or vile according to a certain routine appreciation, independent of reality; a conventional point of view. Considered objectively and relatively, any being is great with reference to those smaller than itself, and any are small with reference to those greater than themselves; heaven and earth are but a grain, a hair is a mountain. Considered from the point of view of utility, all beings are useful for what they can do, all are useless for what they cannot do; the east and west coexist necessarily, by opposition, each one having attributes of its own. Finally, with reference to the taste of the observer, all beings have some side through which they please some, and another side through which they displease others; Yao and Jie both had admirers and detractors. - Abdication ruined neither Yao nor Shun, whereas it ruined Baron Kuai. Revolt benefited Emperors Tang and Wu, whereas it caused Duke Bo to perish. According to the times and circumstances the same actions do not give the same results; what is expedient for one, or in certain circumstances, is not for another. All of this is relative and variable. - A battering-ram is the best thing for breaching a rampart; whereas it would be quite unsuitable for blocking up a hole; different means. Emperor Mu's coursers could cover a thousand li in a day, but they would not have been as good as a cat for catching a rat; different qualities. The owl counts his feathers and catches his lice at night, whereas in daylight he cannot even see a mountain; a different nature. With

stronger reason nothing is fixed amongst moral things, esteem, opinion, etcetera; they all have a double aspect. - In consequence, to wish for good without evil, right without wrong, order without disorder, is to show that one understands nothing of the laws of the universe; it is to dream of a heaven without earth, a yin without a yang. The double aspect coexists in everything. To wish to distinguish, as real entities, these two inseparable correlatives, is to show a weak mind; heaven and earth are one, the yin and the yang are one, and likewise the opposed aspects of all contraries. Of the ancient sovereigns, some obtained the throne by succession, others by usurpation. All are called good sovereigns because they acted in conformity with the taste of the people of their times. Misunderstanding the epoch, acting contrary to the taste of one's contemporaries, that is what qualifies one to be called an usurper. Meditate on these things, Genie of the River, and you will understand that there is neither greatness nor smallness, nobility nor lowliness, good nor evil, in the absolute sense; but that all these things are relative, depending on the times and circumstances, on the appreciation of men, on opportunism.'

'But then,' said the Genie of the River, 'what should I do? What should I not do? What should I admit? What should I regret? - Is there a yes or a no, a moral rule of conduct?' - 'From the point of view of the Principle,' replied the Genie of the Sea, 'there is only an absolute unity, and changing aspects. To put anything of the absolute outside the Principle, would be to err about the Principle. Therefore there is no absolute morality, but only an opportunist expedience. Practically, follow the times and circumstances. Be uniformly just as a reigning prince, beneficent like the God of the Earth, indifferent as an individual; embrace all beings, for all are one. - The Principle is immutable, having had no beginning, and not having an end. Beings change, being born and dying, without a stable permanence. From non-being they pass to being, without rest under any form, through the course of the years and the ages. Beginnings and endings, growth and decay, succeed one another. That is all that we can ascertain, as a rule, as a law, ruling beings. Their life passes on the scene of the world, just as a fleeing horse passes before one's eyes; not a moment without change, without vicissitudes. And you ask what to do, what not to do?... Follow the course of the transformations, act according to the circumstances of the moment; that is all there is to do.'

'Finally,' said the Genie of the River, 'will you teach me the advantages of knowledge of the Principle?' - 'These advantages,' said the Genie of the Sea, 'are as follows: He who knows the Principle, knows the law which derives from it, applies it as it should be applied, and is in consequence respected by all beings.'



The man whose conduct is thus all-wise, is not burnt by fire, drowned by water, harmed by heat or cold, nor by ferocious beasts. Not that he has nothing to fear from these dangers, but because his wisdom helps him to avoid all misfortune. He behaves with such circumspection that no ill comes to him\*. - This wisdom, which comes from the knowledge of the Principle, is what one calls the heavenly element (natural in man), by opposition to the human (artificial) element. For action to conform to original perfection, the heavenly element (nature) must predominate.' - 'Would you clarify the difference between the heavenly and the human,' insisted the Genie of the River. - 'It may be explained as follows,' said the Genie of the Sea: 'Cattle and horses are quadrupeds, that is the heavenly element (their nature). If they have a bit in their mouth or a ring through their nose, that is the human element (which is artificial, against nature). The human must not strangle the heavenly, the artificial must not extinguish the natural, the artefact must not destroy the entity of the truth. To restore one's nature, is to come back to the first truth of being.'

**B.** A Kui (a fabulous animal) with one foot, asked a millipede: 'How do you come to have so many legs?' - The millipede said: 'Nature made me thus, with a central body and filiform legs all round. I move my heavenly gifts (that nature has given me) without knowing why nor how.' - The millipede said to the snake: 'Without feet, you move faster than I who have so many; how do you do it?' - 'I don't know,' said the snake. 'I glide like this, naturally.' - The snake said to the wind: 'I move by means of my vertebrae and my sides; you have no such things, and yet you go from the North Sea to the South Sea quicker than I can glide; how do you do it?' - 'I blow naturally,' said the wind, 'even as far as blowing down trees and turning over houses. But you, little creatures, I have no hold over you, you dominate me.' One being alone is dominated by nothing, the Sage, possessor of the Principle.

**C.** Confucius was passing through Kuang when a troop of armed men of Song surrounded him in such a way that all escape was impossible. Confucius took out his lute and began to sing. His disciple Zi Lu asked him: 'Master, how can you be so gay in these circumstances?'... 'Because,' said Confucius, 'I have done what I can to avoid such an adventure; it comes therefore, not through my own fault, but from destiny. I have also done what I could to break out of this cordon, and if I have not succeeded, it is not due to any negligence, but a consequence of the evils of these times. Under Yao and Shun none of the Sages were reduced to the extremity I am now in, not because of their greater prudence, but because

\*Therefore no invulnerability, as interpreted later; but such great prudence, that all danger is avoided.

destiny was then favourable to everyone. Under Jie and Zhou, none of the Sages could make their way, not because of reduced ability, but because destiny was then unfavourable to all. The bravery of fishermen lies in not fearing marine monsters; that of hunters in not fearing wild beasts; that of warriors in not fearing unsheathed swords, and looking equally well on life and death... Knowing that no happiness comes except in its own time, that all unhappiness is written in destiny, and in consequence not being afraid even in front of imminent danger, but submitting oneself stoically to fate; that is the bravery of the Sage. Wait a moment, Lu, and you will see accomplished what is written in my destiny.' - A few moments after the Sage had spoken these words, the chief of the armed men approached and said: 'We had taken you for a certain Yang Huo, whom we should arrest; please excuse our error'... And they left\*.

D. Gong Sun Long the sophist, said to Prince Mou of Wei: 'When I was young, first I studied the doctrine of the ancient sovereigns (the classical traditions); later I penetrated deep into the question of goodness and fairness (Confucianism); then I scrutinized similarity and difference, substance and accidents, yes and no, licit and illicit (moral logic); I have been right to the bottom of the theories and arguments of all the schools, and I believed myself to be truly strong, when it happened that a certain Zhuang Zi astounded and upset me. I don't know if it is a fault in my dialectic, or a deficit in my knowledge; but the fact is that I, the rhetorical sophist, was struck dumb in front of him, unable to reply and not daring to ask further.' - Prince Mou took a seat, let out a sigh, raised his eyes to heaven, smiled and said: 'Do you know the story of the frog of the old well and the turtle of the eastern sea?... "How happy I am in my well," said the frog to the turtle; "I can jump on the edge, hide in the holes between the bricks, swim on the surface, or dive into the mud. None of the inhabitants of this well, larvae, tadpoles, can do so much as I; therefore I prefer my well to your sea; come and try some of its charms"... To please the frog, the turtle tried. But once its right foot was introduced into the well, it was impossible for it to get its left foot in, so narrow was the well. After having withdrawn its foot, it gave the frog the following information about the sea: "It is more than a thousand li in length, it is deeper than the height of a thousand men mounted on top of each other. At the time of Emperor Yu, there were nine floods in ten years; all of this water ran into the sea, without augmenting it. At the time of Emperor Tang, there were seven droughts in eight years; no water ran into the sea and it still showed not the slightest diminution. Duration, quantity, these terms do not apply to

\*Daoist version of the Confucian text. Confucius believed he escaped because he was destined to save the ancient rites. Here he acts from motives of pure fatalism.

the sea. This constant immobility is the charm of my home"... With these words the frog of the well got vertigo and went out of his little mind. - And you involve yourself in examining the assertions of Zhuang Zi, without knowing clearly how to distinguish between yes and no; don't you resemble that frog who tried to understand the sea? You are trying to do what you are not capable of. One might as well try to make a fly carry off a mountain, or an earthworm wrestle with a torrent. What do you understand of the sublime language of this man? You, the frog of the old well! - He descends as far as the underground springs, and climbs as far as the firmament. He understands beyond space; the unfathomable depths, the great mysteries. Your rules of dialectic and your logical distinctions are not instruments proportional to such an objective. You might as well try to embrace heaven with a pipe, or cut up the earth with an awl. Clear off now, and don't ask for more, out of fear that the same thing will happen to you as happened to the children of Shou Ling who were sent to be educated at Han Dan, and returned to their country on their hands and knees. Don't enquire further, for you will forget your common little knowledge of sophistry, without coming to understand anything of the superior science of Zhuang Zi.' - Gong Sun Long listened to this broadside with his mouth open, holding his tongue, and he fled away in desperation.

E. When Zhuang Zi was fishing with a line on the banks of the River Pu, the King of Chu sent two of his grand officers to offer him the office of minister. Without pulling in his line, without taking his eyes off his float, Zhuang Zi said to them: 'I have heard it said that the King of Chu carefully guards, in the temple of his ancestors, the carapace of a transcendent turtle sacrificed three thousand years ago, to be used for divination. Tell me, if they had given it the choice, would this turtle have preferred to die so that its carapace would be honoured, or would it have preferred to live dragging its tail in the mud of the swamps?' - 'It would have preferred to live dragging its tail in the mud of the swamps,' said the two grand officers together. - 'Then,' said Zhuang Zi, 'return to where you came from, I also prefer to drag my tail in the mud of the swamps. I will continue to live obscurely, but free; I don't want an office, which often costs the life of him who holds it, and which costs him peace always.'

F. Hui Zi was minister of the Principality of Liang when Zhuang Zi went to pay him a visit. Someone made Hui Zi believe that Zhuang Zi was coming with the intention of supplanting him. Therefore Hui Zi ordered a search lasting three days and nights, with the intention of having him seized. Zhuang Zi, who had not yet entered Liang, was not taken, but heard about the search. Later, when he met

Hui Zi, he said: 'Do you know that bird from the south called the argus? When it flies from the south towards the north, it only rests on the Wu Tong tree, it only feeds on the bread tree, and it only drinks from the purest springs. And yet, when it flew by one day, an owl that was eating a dead field-mouse feared that it was going to dispute its carrion and let out a cry to intimidate it. The minister of Liang did the same in my case.'

**G.** Zhuang Zi and Hui Zi were taking their recreation on a foot-bridge over a stream; Zhuang Zi said: 'Look how the fish are jumping, that is how they take their pleasure.' - 'You are not a fish,' said Hui Zi; 'how do you know what their pleasure is?' - 'You are not I,' said Zhuang Zi; 'how do you know that I don't know they take pleasure in that?' - 'I am not you,' said Hui Zi, 'and in consequence I don't know what you know or don't know, that I agree; but in any case I know that you are not a fish, and it remains established therefore that you don't know what is their pleasure.' - 'You are taken,' said Zhuang Zi. 'Let's come back to your first question. You asked me "how do you know what their pleasure is?"... By that phrase you have admitted that I know it; because you would not have asked me the "how" of what you knew I did not know. And now, how did I know it? By direct observation, from the footbridge of the stream.' A means unknown to the sophists of that time, quibblers who do not observe.

Chapter 18. Perfect Joy.

**A.** Under heaven is there, or is there not, a state of perfect contentment? Is there, or is there not, a means of lengthening the life of the body? What should one do, what should one not do, in order to attain this? - The common people look for their contentment in wealth, rank, longevity, and the esteem of others; in repose, good living, good clothing, beauty, music, and the rest. They dread poverty, obscurity, shortening of life, and ill-repute; lack of repose, good food, good clothing, beautiful sights and sounds. If they do not obtain these things they are saddened and afflicted... Is it not senseless to ascribe everything thus to the body? Some of these things are even exterior and foreign to the body; such as wealth accumulated beyond possible utilization, rank, and the esteem of others. And yet, for these things, the common people use up their strength and torture themselves day and night. Truly worries are born with man, and follow him all his life; even in the dullness of old age, the fear of death does not leave him. Alone, the military officers do not fear death and they are esteemed by the common people for it, rightly or wrongly, I do not know; for, if their bravery deprives them of life, it preserves the lives of their co-citizens; there is for and against. Civil officials who bring death on themselves by their impertinent criticisms, are, on the contrary, blamed by the common people; rightly or wrongly, I do not know, for, if their outspokenness deprives them of life, it assures them of fame, there is for and against. As for the common people themselves, I avow that I do not understand how they draw contentment from that which contents them; the fact is that these things content them, and do not content me. For me, happiness consists in inaction, whereas the common people rush about all the time. I hold as true the saying which goes: 'Supreme contentment is to have nothing which contents; supreme glory is not to be glorified.' Any act accomplished will be discussed, and will be qualified as good by some and bad by others. Only that which has not been done cannot be criticized. In inaction there is supreme contentment, which makes the life of the body last. Allow me to support my assertion by an illustrious example: Heaven owes its limpidity, and earth its stability, to non-action; conjointly, these two non-actions, heavenly and earthly, produce all beings. 'Heaven and earth,' goes the saying, 'do everything by doing nothing.' Where is the man who has come to do nothing? That man will himself also be capable of doing everything.

**B.** Zhuang Zi's wife died and Hui Zi went to mourn her, as was the custom. He found Zhuang Zi crouching, singing and beating out a rhythm on a bowl held between his feet. Shocked, Hui Zi said to him: 'That you do not weep for the death of she who was your

companion for life and who gave you sons, is already quite singular; but to sing and beat out a rhythm in front of her coffin; this is too much.' - 'Not at all,' said Zhuang Zi. 'When she died, I was affected for an instant. Then, reflecting on the event, I understood that there was no reason for it. There was a time when this being had not been born, had no organized body, had not even a little subtle matter, but was contained indistinctly in the great mass. One turn of this mass gave her her subtle matter, which, forming an organized body, became animated and was born. Another turn of the mass, and there she is, dead. The phases of life and death are linked together like the periods of the four seasons. She who was my wife sleeps now in the great dormitory (the intermediate state between heaven and earth), awaiting her next transformation. If I should cry for her, I would give the impression of knowing nothing about destiny (about the universal and inescapable law of transformations). Now, since I know something of this, I do not weep for her.'

C. Zhi Li and Hua Ji (fictitious characters) were contemplating together the tombs of the ancients, scattered on the plain at the foot of the Kun Lun Mountains, the place where the Yellow Emperor settled and found his rest. Suddenly the two of them noticed that each had a carbuncle on his left arm (which was often mortal in China). After the first moment of surprise, Zhi Li asked: 'Does it frighten you?' - 'Why should it?' replied Hua Ji. 'Life is something borrowed, a state of passage, a stage in the dust and smell of this world. Life and death succeed each other, like day and night. And then, did we not come to contemplate, amongst the tombs of the ancients, the effect of the law of transformation? When this law reaches us in our turn, why should we complain?'

D. When Zhuang Zi was returning to the Kingdom of Chu, he saw an intact bare skull lying on the roadside. Stroking it with his switch, he said to it: 'Did you perish because of brigandage, or through devotion to your country; through bad behaviour or from poverty; or did you die a natural death, because your time had come?'... Then, picking up the skull, he used it the following night as a pillow. - At midnight the skull appeared to him in a dream and said: 'You spoke to me in the style of the sophists and rhetoricians, like a man who takes human things as true. Now, after death, these things are finished with. Would you like me to tell you about the beyond?' - 'Willingly,' said Zhuang Zi. - The skull said: 'After death there are neither superiors nor inferiors, seasons nor work. It is repose in the constancy of heaven and earth. Its peace surpasses the happiness of kings.' - 'Bah,' said Zhuang Zi, 'if I were to persuade the governor of destiny (the Principle) to return to you your body, skin, flesh and bones, your father, mother, wife, children,

village, and all that you knew; I think that would not displease you?' - The skull looked fixedly at him with its caved orbits, and said: 'No! I would not renounce my royal peace in order to return to human misery.'

E. When Yen Yuan, the cherished disciple, left for the Principality of Qi, Confucius appeared sad. His disciple Zi Gong got up from his mat and said: 'May I dare to ask you why this journey of Hui saddens you?' - 'I will tell you,' said Confucius. 'Once, Guan Zi pronounced these words, which I have always found to be true: "A small bag cannot hold a large object; a short rope cannot reach to the bottom of a well." Yes, the capacity of each being is included in its destiny, nothing can be added to it, nothing can be taken away from it. I fear therefore that if, following his convictions and his zeal, Hui expounds to the Marquis of Qi the theories of Yao and Shun, of the Yellow Emperor, Sui Ren, and Shen Nong, this man of limited capacity, seeing only a criticism of his government in his discourses, may become angry and put him to death. - Opportunism alone makes for success. Everything does not suit everyone. One should not judge others after oneself. Once, a sea bird fell down at the gates of the capital of Lu. As it was an extraordinary phenomenon, the marquis thought perhaps it was a transcendent being visiting his principality. He went therefore in person to care for the bird, and carried it to the temple of his ancestors, where he gave it a feast. They performed the Gju Shao symphony of Emperor Shun in front of it. They offered it a great sacrifice, a bull, a billy-goat, and a pig. However the bird, its eyes haggard and looking heart-broken, did not touch the stew nor taste the wine. After three days it died of hunger and thirst... This was because the marquis, judging the tastes of the bird after his own, had treated it as he treated himself, and not as one should treat a bird. A sea bird needs space, forests and plains, rivers and lakes, fish for its food, freedom to fly and rest where it wills. Hearing the speech of men was a punishment for this poor bird; how much more the music they made for it, and all the movement they made around it. If one were to play the Gju Shao symphony of Shun, or likewise the Xian Chi symphony of the Yellow Emperor, on the banks of lake Dong Ting, the birds would fly away, quadrupeds would hide themselves, fish would dive into the deepest waters, and men, on the contrary, would listen and marvel. Fish live in the water, and men die in it. The nature of beings is diverse, and their tastes are not the same. It is the same for men, there are differences; what pleases some does not please others. Thus the ancient Sages did not assume that all men had the same capacity, and they did not employ no matter whom for no matter what. They classed men according to their works, and dealt with them according to their results. This adequate and just recognition of individuals is

a condition for any success. If Yen Hui weighs up the Marquis of Qi well, and speaks to him accordingly, he will succeed, if not, he will perish.'

F. Whilst Lie Zi, who was travelling, was taking his meal by the roadside, he saw an old skull\*, picked it up, and said to it: 'You and I know about life and death; that this distinction is not real, but only modal; that one should not say of you that you rest, and of me that I move; the wheel turns and transformations succeed one another without cease.' The germs of life are numerous and indeterminate. Such a germ will become a covering of duckweed if it falls on a pond, a carpet of moss if it is thrown on a hill. Rising up, the moss becomes the Wu Zu plant, whose roots change into worms and whose leaves change into butterflies. These butterflies produce a larva that lives around fireplaces, which is called Qu Tuo. After a thousand days this Qu Tuo becomes the bird Qian Wu Gu, whose saliva gives birth to the Si Mi insect. The latter becomes Shi Xi, then Mou Rui, then Fu Kuan... Yang Xi and Bu Sun plants are two alternating forms. From old bamboos comes the Qing Ning insect, which becomes a leopard, then a horse, then a man. Man returns to the craft of weaving from the incessant universal revolution. In their turn, all beings come from the great cosmic craft, to return there in their time, and so on\*\*.

\*Compare with Lie Zi chapter 1 E, and D above.

\*\*Daoist transformism; compare with Lie Zi chapter 1 E. Neither life nor death, but indestructible germs, which form individuals; a continuous transformation in which the being is successively reclothed in perceptible form.



## Chapter 19. The Meaning Of Life.

**A.** He who understands the meaning of life is no longer troubled by what does not contribute to life. He who understands the nature of destiny no longer tries to scrutinize this inscrutable entity. To maintain the body one must use appropriate means, without excess however, for all excess is useless. It is even more important to maintain the vital spirit, without which the body is finished. The living being has not been able to prevent its coming to life (at birth); it cannot, moreover, avoid the fact that one day (at the time of death) life will leave it. The common people believe that, to conserve life, it is enough to maintain the body. They are wrong. It is necessary above all to prevent wear of one's vital spirit, which is almost impossible amongst the troubles of the world. Therefore, to conserve and lengthen life, one must leave the world and its troubles. It is in the peace of a regulated existence, in communion with nature, that one finds a resurgence of vitality, a renewal of life. - Let us repeat: Abandoning worry and business conserves life, for this protects the body from fatigue and the vital spirit from wear. He whose body and vital spirit are intact and well, is united with nature. Now nature is the father-mother of all beings. The being is formed by condensation; it is done away with through dissipation, to become yet again another being. And if, at the moment of this dissipation, its body and vital spirit are intact, it is capable of transmigration. In essence, it becomes the co-operator with heaven\*.

**B.** Lie Zi said to Yin (Yin Xi), the guardian of the pass, confidant of Lao Zi: 'The supreme man penetrates all bodies (stone, metal, says the commentary) without encountering any resistance from them; he is not burnt by fire; no altitude gives him vertigo; tell me why this is so?' - 'Uniquely,' said Yin, 'because he has kept the original vital spirit received at birth, pure and intact; not through any procedure or formula. Sit down and I will explain it to you. All material beings have a shape, sound, and colour, of their own. From these diverse qualities come their mutual enmities (fire destroys wood, etc.). In the primordial state of unity and universal immobility, these oppositions do not exist. They are all derived from the diversification of beings, and from their contacts caused by the universal gyration. They would cease, if the diversity and movement were to cease. They cease straight away to affect the being who has reduced his individual self and its movement to almost nothing. This being (the perfect Daoist Sage) no longer

\*The commentary says that it passes from the category of beings influenced by heaven and earth, into the great Whole, as an integral part. Daoist idea of co-operation with heaven, comparable to the Indian notion of retreat in Brahma.

enters into conflict with any being, because he is established in the infinite, effaced in the indefinite. He has become, and holds himself at, the point of departure of transformations, a neutral point where there are no conflicts (which are only produced with respect to particular, separate, ways). Through concentration of his nature, nurturing of his vital spirit, and bringing together all his forces, he is united with the principle of all geneses. No being can harm him because his nature is whole, and his vital spirit is intact. - Take, for example, an absolutely drunken man; if he should fall from a carriage, he would perhaps be bruised, but not killed. Why should this be so? His bones and joints do not differ from those of other men, but, at the moment of the fall, the vital spirit of this man, concentrated through unconsciousness, was absolutely intact. At the moment of the fall, because of his unconsciousness, the ideas of life and death, fear and hope, had not aroused the heart of this man. He did not tense himself, and the ground was not hard to him, that is why he did not break any limbs. This drunk owed the integrity of his body to his state of drunkenness. In the same way the perfect Sage will keep intact through his state of union with nature. The Sage is hidden in nature, and nothing can harm him. - Therefore, whosoever is harmed should not blame what has harmed him; he should blame himself, his vulnerability being a proof of imperfection. A reasonable man does not blame the sword that wounded him, or the tile that fell on him. If all men were to seek the cause of their own ills in their own imperfection, there would be perfect peace, the end of wars and punishments. It would be the end of the reign of this false human nature (an artificial nature invented by the politicians) which has filled the world with brigands; it would be the beginning of the reign of true heavenly nature (natural nature), the source of all good actions. Not to strangle nature, not to believe in men; that is the way of return to the truth (to original integrity).'

C. When Confucius was travelling in the Kingdom of Chu, coming out of a wood, he saw a hunchback who was catching flying grasshoppers with a rod\*, just as easily as one picks up an object with the hand. - 'You are truly skilled,' said Confucius to him; 'tell me your secret.' - 'My secret,' said the hunchback, 'is this: For about six months I practised holding balls steady on the end of my rod. When I could hold two, few grasshoppers escaped me. When I could hold three, I missed only one in ten. When I could hold five, I never missed any. My secret consists in concentrating all my energy on the goal. I have mastered my arm, my entire body, such that they show no more emotion or distraction than a piece of wood.

\*The commentators explain this in two ways. He stabbed them in flight, say some; hardly believable. There was glue on the end of the rod, say others; most likely. Cf. Lie Zi ch. 2 J.

In the vast universe full of things, I see only the grasshopper that I wish to take. Since nothing distracts me, it is taken naturally.' - Turning himself towards his disciples, Confucius said to them: 'To unify one's intentions; to have only one, which becomes blended with the vital energy; that sums up this hunchback's discourse.'

D. Yen Yuan, the favourite disciple, said to Confucius: 'When I was crossing the Shang rapids\*, the ferryman handled his craft with a marvellous dexterity. I asked him: "How can one learn to manoeuvre so well?" "A swimmer," he said, "learns it easily, a diver knows it without having to learn"... I did not understand him. Can you explain it to me?' - 'Yes,' said Confucius (speaking as a Daoist master): 'A swimmer thinks little of the water, being familiar with its dangers, which he scarcely fears any more; a diver does not think of it at all, being in his element in water. The feeling of danger affects the swimmer little, he has almost complete use of his natural faculties. The feeling of danger does not affect the diver at all, he is one with the ferry-boat and in consequence governs it perfectly. - In an archery contest, if the prize is an earthenware object of little value, the archer will be uninfluenced and have free use of all his skill. If the prize is a belt buckle in bronze or jade, the archer will be influenced, and his aim less certain. If the proposed prize is a golden object, his aim will be strongly influenced and quite uncertain. The same man, the same talent, but more, or less, influenced by an exterior object. All distractions cause foolishness and nervousness.'

E. Whilst Duke Wei of Zhou was receiving Tian Kai Zhi in audience, he said to him: 'I have heard tell that your master Zhu Xian has studied the problem of the conservation of life. Please tell me what you have heard him say on this subject.' - 'What can I tell you?' said Tian Kai Zhi, 'since I was only the sweeper-up in Zhu Xian's house\*\*.' - 'Don't run yourself down, Master Tian,' said the duke; 'I expect to be satisfied.' - Then Tian Kai Zhi said: 'Zhu Xian said that, to conserve one's life, one should do as the shepherds, who, when a sheep goes astray, beat it to make it rejoin the flock, where it is in safe keeping.' - 'What does that mean?' said the duke. - 'I will explain it,' said Tian Kai Zhi. 'In the Principality of Lu, a certain Shan Bao passed his life in the mountains, drinking only water and having no relations with men. Thanks to this regime, at the age of seventy he was still as fresh as a child. A hungry tiger found him and devoured him... Zhang Yi was one of the most skilled doctors. Rich and poor squabbled for his consultations. At the age of forty he died of a contagious fever picked up at the

\*Compare with Lie Zi, chapter 2 H.

\*\*Ritual humility of the disciple, who must fear doing harm to his master by badly reporting his teaching.

bedside of a patient... Shan Bao cared for his vital spirit, but let a tiger devour his body. Zhang Yi cared for his body, but let his vital spirit be destroyed by a fever. Both of them were wrong for not beating their sheep (for not watching over their security). Confucius has said: "Wisdom is keeping to the true centre; not too much isolation; not too many relationships." At a dangerous pass where accidents are frequent, men warn each other, and only pass in numbers, taking the necessary precautions. They do not warn each other, on the other hand, of the dangers inherent in an eccentric conduct or dialectic. This is unreasonable.'

F. The sacrificial officer who was visiting, in grand official costume, the enclosure of the pigs destined for sacrifice, gave them the following lecture: 'Why do you die with such bad grace, when your death procures for you so many advantages and honours? I fatten you for three months. Before the sacrifice I keep in continence for ten days and abstinence for three days, all for your sakes. After the sacrifice, I arrange your parts carefully, on white cloths, lying on sculptured sideboards. Aren't you wrong in giving me such black looks?' - If this man had truly thought of the pigs' welfare, he would have let them live in their enclosure until the end of their days, even if it were only with husks and bran as food. But he was thinking of his own good, his work, his salary, their funerals, and his official duties after their death. He was satisfied because he had what he needed; he judged that the pigs should be satisfied although treated against nature; an illusion caused by egoism.

G. Duke Huan of Qi was hunting near a swamp, his minister Guan Zhong driving his chariot. Suddenly the duke saw a spectre. He placed his hand on Guan Zhong's and said quietly: 'Can you see it?' 'I can see nothing,' said the minister. - When he got back to his palace the duke began to ramble, said he was ill, and spent several days without coming out of his bedroom. Then Gao Ao (an official of imperial blood) gave him the following discourse: 'You are only ill from a foolish fear; a spectre cannot harm a person such as you. When too much vital spirit has been dispensed in a fit of passion (anger or fear), it produces a deficit. When the vital spirit accumulated in the upper part of the body (excess of yang) cannot descend, a man becomes irascible. When the vital spirit accumulated in the lower part of the body (excess of yin) cannot rise up, a man becomes forgetful. When the vital spirit accumulated in the centre can neither rise up nor descend, then a man feels ill (his heart being obstructed, says the commentary). That is your case; too much concentration; distract yourself.' - 'Yes, perhaps,' said the duke; 'but tell me, do spectres exist?' - 'They do,' said the official. 'There are the Li of the drains, the Ji of the stoke-holes, the Lei Ting of the dunghills. There are the Bei A and Wa Long

in the north-east; the Yi Yang in the north-west. There are the Wang Xiang in the water; the Zhen on the hills; the Kui in the mountains; the Fang Huang on the steppes; the Wei Tuo\* in the swamps.' - 'Ah,' said the duke, who had seen his spectre near a swamp. 'What does the Wei Tuo look like?' - 'It is as thick as an axle,' said Gao Ao, 'long as a carriage pole, clothed in violet and capped in red. It does not like the rolling of chariots. When it hears them, it rears up, blocking its ears. Its apparition is a good sign. He who sees it becomes supreme ruler' (the great ambition of the Duke of Qi). - 'Ah,' said the duke, bursting out laughing; 'the Wei Tuo that I saw is a good thing.' - Straight away he performed his toilet, whilst continuing to chat with the official. Before evening he was found to be completely cured, by suggestion, without having taken any medicine\*\*.

H. Ji Sing Zi was training a fighting-cock for Emperor Xuan of the Zhou dynasty\*\*\*. After ten days, when asked for news, he replied: 'The training is not yet finished; the animal is still vain and wilful.' - Ten days later, asked again, he said: 'Not yet, the animal is still too passionate, too nervous.' - Ten days later, asked once more, he said: 'It is ready! The sound and sight of similar birds move it no more than if they were of wood. No cock will hold out against it\*\*\*\*.'

I. Confucius was admiring the waterfall at Lu Liang\*\*\*\*\*. Falling from thirty times a man's height, it produced a foaming torrent forty li in length, so turbulent that neither turtle, cayman, nor fish could frolic in it. Suddenly Confucius saw a man swimming amongst the eddies. Taking him for a desperate man who had intended to drown himself, he told his disciples to follow the bank and pull him out, if possible. Several hundred paces lower down, the man came out of the water himself, undid his hair to dry, and began to walk along singing. Confucius caught up with him and said: 'I almost took you for a transcendent being, but now I see that you are a man. How can one learn to swim with such ease? Please tell me your secret.' - 'I have no secret,' said the man. 'I began by swimming methodically; then it became natural, and now I move like an aquatic being. My body becomes one with the water, descending with the turbulence, coming up with the eddies. I

\*Folk-lore of the time. The Wei Tuo alias Wei Yi.

\*\*Health and sanity result from perfect natural equilibrium. Spectres are subjective, not objective; an exteriorisation of interior disorders, like dreams, hallucinations, etc.

\*\*\*Compare with Lie Zi chapter 2 Q.

\*\*\*\*Commentary: It is concentrated on one, on one thing. Its activity turned inwards is fused with its vital principle.

\*\*\*\*\*Compare with Lie Zi chapter 2 I.

follow the movement of the waters, not my own will. That is my secret... I wanted to learn to swim, having been born beside the water. From habit, swimming became natural to me. Since I have lost all notion of what I do when I swim, water has become my element and it supports me because I am one with it.'

**J.** Qing the sculptor made, for a peal of bells, a belfry whose harmonious beauty marvelled everyone. The Marquis of Lu went to admire it, and asked Qing how he did it. - 'Like this,' said Qing... 'When I received the commission to make the belfry, I concentrated all my vital forces, and withdrew myself completely into my heart. After three days of this exercise, I had forgotten the praise and remuneration that I would receive for this work. After five days, I no longer hoped for success, and I no longer feared failure. After seven days I had lost even the notion of my body and limbs, and entirely forgotten your highness and his courtesans; all my faculties were concentrated on their object and I felt that the moment for action had come. I went into the forest and contemplated the natural shapes of the trees, the most perfect from amongst them. When I had become fully permeated with this ideal, only then did I put my hands to work. That was what directed my work. It was through the fusion of my nature into one with that of the trees, that this belfry has the qualities which make it admired.'

**K.** Dong Ye Ji presented himself to Duke Zhuang, in order to show him his team of horses, and his talent as a driver. His horses advanced and retreated without the slightest deviation from a straight line. They described, to right and left, such perfect circles, that they might have been traced with a compass. The duke admired this precision, then, wishing to assure himself of its constancy, he asked Ji to do a hundred consecutive turns on a given track. Ji had the foolishness to accept. Yen He, who saw, whilst passing, this forced overtime, said to the duke: 'Ji's horses are going to be fagged out.' The duke did not reply. A little later, Ji's horses had to be brought back. Then the duke asked Yen He: 'How could you predict what would happen?' - 'Because,' said Yen He, 'I saw Ji pushing horses that were already tired\*.'

**L.** Chui the craftsman drew free-hand circles as if they had been drawn with a compass. That was because he had come to draw them without thinking of them; in consequence his circles were perfect like the products of nature. His mind was concentrated on one, without preoccupation or distraction. - A shoe is perfect when the foot does not feel it. A belt is perfect when the waist does not feel it. A heart is perfect when, having lost the artificial notion

\*All effort is against nature. Nature alone lasts, and anything that is against it does not.

of good and evil, it does good naturally and abstains naturally from evil... A mind is perfect when it is without interior perception, without tendencies towards anything exterior. Perfection is to be perfect without knowing it, (like unconscious nature).

**M.** Sun Xiu went to Bian Qing Zi and complained: 'They have unjustly given me the reputation of a good-for-nothing, of a bad citizen. Now if my lands have given a poor return, it is because the years have been bad; if I have done nothing for my prince, it is because the opportunity has not presented itself. And yet they wish to have nothing to do with me, neither in the village nor in the town. In heaven's name, what have I done to deserve such a destiny?' - 'The superior man,' said Bian Zi, 'forgets himself to the point of not knowing if he has organs or senses. He holds himself outside the dust and mud of this world, far from the affairs of men. He acts without aiming for success, and governs without seeking to dominate. Is that how you have behaved yourself? Have you not rather made a show of your knowledge, to the point of offending the ignorant? Have you not made a show of your superiority, and sought to shine even so far as to eclipse the sun and the moon, thus alienating yourself from everyone? And after that, you blame heaven! Has heaven not given you all that it should, a well made body, a normal span of life, and the rest? Is it not thanks to heaven that you are neither blind, nor deaf, nor crippled, like so many others? What right have you to blame heaven? Clear off.' - When Sun Xiu had gone, Bian Zi sat down, collected himself, raised his eyes to heaven, and sighed. - 'What is the matter?' asked his disciples. - Bian Zi said: 'I spoke to Sun Xiu of the qualities of the superior man. It is too much for him. Perhaps he will lose his head.' - 'Be at peace,' said the disciples. 'If Sun Xiu is right, he will perceive it, and what you said will do him no harm. If he is wrong, what you said will torment him, and he will come back to learn more, to his benefit.' - 'I was wrong, nevertheless,' said Bian Zi. 'One should not tell a man what one understands oneself, if he is not capable of understanding it... A long time ago, the Prince of Lu sacrificed and gave a concert to a sea bird which had fallen at the gate of his town\*. The bird died of hunger, thirst, and fear. The prince should have treated it, not after his own manner, but in the manner of birds, then the result would have been different, favourable and not fatal. I acted like the Prince of Lu, in speaking of the superior man to this imbecile of a Sun Xiu... To drive a mouse in a horse and carriage, to give a concert of bells and drums to a quail, is to terrify these little creatures. I must have driven Sun Xiu crazy.'

\*Compare with chapter 18 E.

Chapter 20. Voluntary Obscurity.

A. When Zhuang Zi was crossing the mountains, he saw a great tree with long and luxuriant branches. A woodman who was cutting wood nearby did not touch this tree. 'Why not?' asked Zhuang Zi... 'Because its wood is good-for-nothing,' said the woodman... 'The fact of being good-for-nothing is valuable to this tree, allowing it to live until its natural death,' concluded Zhuang Zi. - After crossing the mountains, Zhuang Zi received hospitality at a friend's house. Happy to see him again, the master of the house told his domestic to kill a duck and cook it. 'Which of our two ducks should I kill?' asked the domestic; 'the one that quacks, or the mute one?' - 'The mute one,' said the master. - The next day the disciple who accompanied Zhuang Zi said to him: 'Yesterday the tree was saved because it was good-for-nothing; that duck was killed because it couldn't quack; therefore, being capable or incapable, which one saves?' - 'That depends on the case,' said Zhuang Zi laughing. 'One single thing saves in all cases; it is to be elevated to the knowledge of the Principle and its action, and to keep oneself in indifference and abstraction. Such a man thinks as little of praise as of blame. He knows how to rise up like the dragon, and to flatten himself like the serpent, bending himself to circumstances, not persistently taking any side. Should his position be elevated or humble, he adapts to his circumstances. He frolics in the bosom of the ancestor of all things (the Principle). He disposes of all beings as he sees fit, not being attached to any of them. Come what may, he fears nothing. Such were Shen Nong and the Yellow Emperor. The present-day politicians (Confucius and his disciples) act in quite the opposite way, and therefore they experience set-backs. After condensation comes dissipation; after success, ruin. Strength draws on the attack, elevation attracts criticism, action is not effected without deficits, wise advice is misunderstood, nothing is stable and durable. Remember well, disciple, that the only solid base of knowledge is the Principle and its action' (indifference and abstraction).

B. The incorruptible Xiong Yiliao went to visit the Marquis of Lu, and noting that he was sad, asked him the reason for it. The marquis said: 'Although I have studied the rules of the ancients and sought to honour my ancestors; although I have venerated the spirits and honoured the Sages, personally and constantly, I have been afflicted, time after time, with all sorts of ills.' - 'That does not surprise me,' said Yi Liao. 'The means you have employed will not protect you. Consider the fox and the leopard. These animals take care to retire into the depths of the forests and the mountain caves, coming out only at night with many precautions, enduring hunger and thirst rather than risking adventuring into inhabited places; they always end up in a net or trap. Why? Because men



covet their beautiful fur. Now, your highness, the Marquisate of Lu is your fur, which your neighbours covet. If you wish to find peace, lose yourself in benevolence, extinguish all the desires of your heart, retire into solitude. In the land of Nan Yue there is a town called the Seat of Solid Virtue. Its inhabitants are ignorant and dull, without personal interests and desires. They produce, but do not hoard; they give without asking for anything in return. They have neither etiquette nor ceremonies. However, despite their savage air, they practise the great natural laws, celebrating births and mourning deaths. Marquis, leave your marquisate, renounce the common life; let us go and live there together.' - 'It is far,' said the marquis; 'the road is difficult; there are mountains and rivers to cross; I have neither boat nor carriage.' Yi Liao said: 'If you were detached from your position, if you were not attached to your country, if you desired to go there, your desire would transport you.' - 'It is far,' said the marquis, 'and what about provisions? What about companions?' - Yi Liao said: 'If you would not cling to your luxury, if you were not attached to your well-being, you would not preoccupy yourself with provisions; you would confide yourself to the rivers, to the sea, not even fearing to lose sight of land; and abandoning your companions would not make you draw back. But I see clearly, master of your subjects, that your subjects are your masters, for you cling to them. You are not a Yao, who would never consider anyone as his subject, and was never subject to anyone. I have tried to cure you of your melancholy, but you are not man enough to employ the sole effective remedy, which consists, after having abandoned everything, in uniting oneself with the Principle, in abstraction. This abstraction must go as far as the forgetting of one's personality. For, if one keeps the notion of one's personality, its conflicts with those of others will prevent one finding peace. Take a ferry crossing a river. If an empty boat drifts into collision with it, even if the ferrymen were irascible, they would not get angry, because no person had entered into conflict with them, the boat being empty. If, on the contrary, there was a person in the boat, cries and insults would quickly come from the ferry. Why? Because there was a conflict of persons... A man delivered of his personality could run all over the world without experiencing conflict.'

C. Duke Ling of Wei charged a certain She with the collection of money for making a peal of bells. He established himself on a knoll by the town entrance. After three months the peal was cast and hung in place. Qing Ji of the Zhou imperial blood, said to him: 'How did you succeed so well and so quickly?' - He said: 'I took care to do nothing. Doesn't the saying go: "Chiselling and polishing are not as good as letting nature act." Looking quite indifferent, without occupying myself in any way, I let the people

do as they wished, spontaneously, like the operation of nature. They came, bringing their donations, without my having called them, and they went away without my having retained them. I said nothing, neither to those who displeased me, nor to those who pleased me. They all gave what they could, or would, and I cashed up without observations. It all happened without the slightest hitch. The same approach would make the most considerable enterprise succeed in the same way' (the government of a principality or an empire, says the commentary).

**D.** After Confucius had been blockaded for seven days with his disciples on the borders of the Principalities of Chen and Cai, and where he had almost died of starvation, Grand Duke Ren presented his condolences to him in these terms: 'Master, you have seen death close by, this time.' - 'Yes,' said Confucius. - 'Were you afraid?' - 'Yes,' said Confucius. - 'Then,' said Grand Duke Ren, 'I will give you the recipe which preserves one from the risk of death... The Yi Dai bird lives in flocks on the east coast. As each individual is afraid, they fly away in perfect close formation, not one of them leaving the mass to advance or retreat. When they eat, they do so in a troop, none of them straying off to snatch a better mouthful, each one pecking in its place. This good co-ordination protects them against animals, men, and all accidents. It is the same for men who live alike with the others, who do not form a separate group as you do, Confucius. To avoid ills, it is also necessary to avoid affecting extraordinary qualities or talents as you do. The straightest tree is the first to be cut down. The well with the sweetest water is the first to be drained dry. Your science frightens the ignorant, your light dazzles the foolish. Do not eclipse the sun and the moon. These pretensions draw misfortune towards you. Once, I heard this spoken by a man of high merit: "Boasting closes up the way of fortune; having merit and renown attracts ruin to oneself. Effacing oneself, hiding amongst the masses, gives security"... Following the rest without distinguishing oneself, going one's way without making oneself noticed, modestly, simply, even making oneself pass as a common person; effacing the memory of one's merits and reputation; this is the secret for living in peace with men. The superior man seeks for obscurity. Why do you seek for notoriety?' 'Thank you,' said Confucius; and, interrupting his ordinary relationships, he sent his disciples away, hid himself amongst the reeds of a swamp, dressed in skins, and lived on acorns and chestnuts. At length he returned so perfectly to a state of nature that his presence no longer gave any fear to the birds and quadrupeds. Even men ended up by finding him bearable.

**E.** One day Confucius said to Master Sang Hu: 'I have been run out of the Principality of Lu twice. At Song they cut down the tree

that was sheltering me. They blocked my route in Wei. I had to run from danger at Shang and Zhou. I was blockaded between Chen and Cai. Following these successive misfortunes, my friends keep away from me, and my disciples leave me. What have I done for all this to happen to me?' - Sang Hu said: 'You know the story of Lin Hui, who, during the rout of Jia, fled, throwing away his jade sceptre worth a good thousand ingots of gold, and carrying his little child on his back. The sceptre was certainly worth more than the child, and the child was more difficult to save than the sceptre. Why? Because interest alone attached him to his sceptre, whereas nature bound him to the child. Now interest is a feeble link which misfortune takes away, whereas nature is a strong link, which resists all trials. It is the same for interested friendship and transcendent friendship. The superior man, somewhat cold, attracts; the common person, although warm, repels. Links without a profound reason are undone as easily as they are made. Now you are nothing but a common man and interest is the only thing between you and your disciples. Therefore their attachment ceases with adversity.' - 'Thank you,' said Confucius... He retired pensive, closed his school and renounced the study of books. His disciples who had been sent away no longer revered him, but began to esteem him. - Another time, Sang Hu said: 'When he was at the point of death, Shun intimated to Yu the following: "Take great care! Affection which has as its base nothing more than corporeal forms is not solid. To be solid, affection must be founded on serious reasons. To be loved through imposition is worthless. Ascendancy conquered by true qualities is alone durable. One is faithful to such a man, not for his beauty, nor his favours, but for his intrinsic value."'

F. Dressed in a patched robe of coarse cloth, his shoes tied to his feet with string, Zhuang Zi met the King of Wei. - 'What distress I see you in, master,' said the king. - 'I beg your pardon,' said Zhuang Zi; 'poverty, not distress. He who possesses the science of the Principle and its action, is never in distress. He can experience poverty, if he is born in unfortunate times... Take a monkey in a wood of beautiful trees with long, smooth, branches; it frolics with such ease that neither Yi nor Peng Meng (famous archers) would be able to aim at it. But when it must climb in stunted and spiny trees, how much less agile it is! It is nevertheless the same animal, with the same bones and tendons, but the circumstances have become unfavourable and prevent it from making free use of its means... Likewise the Sage born under a stupid prince who is surrounded by incapable ministers, has to suffer. This was the case of Bi Gan, whose heart was torn out by the tyrant Zhou Xin.'

G. When Confucius was blockaded between Chen and Cai for seven

days without being able to cook any food, he took a piece of dead wood in his left hand, and beat upon it with a dead branch in his right hand, singing the ode of Master Piao. It was music without notes or rhythm, the natural murmur of a wounded heart, recalling that of the earth under the ploughshare. - Yen Hui, the favourite disciple, held the pose of a desperate man, with arms crossed, looking at his master. Fearing that he was becoming too inflamed, Confucius said to him: 'Hui, it is easy to resign oneself to natural trials. It is difficult to remain indifferent to the favours of men. There is no beginning that is not followed by an end. Man is one with heaven. I who sing now, who am I\*?' - Yen Hui did not understand, and asked for an explanation: '"It is easy to resign oneself to natural trials;" what does that mean, master?' - Confucius said: 'Hunger, thirst, cold, heat, poverty, obstacles and contradictions, all these are included in cosmic evolution, in the law of transformations; therefore every man meets with these things along his way, and must resign himself to them. An inferior must not revolt against the dispositions of his superior. How much more is submission incumbent on all men with reference to heaven!' - Yen Hui continued: '"It is difficult to remain indifferent to the favours of men;" what does that mean?' - Confucius said: 'A man in office attracts both honours and money. These exterior things add nothing to his moral worth, and change nothing of his destiny. He who lets himself be seduced by them falls from the rank of Sage to the level of thieves (who are tempted by money). Now, to live amidst wealth and honours without allowing oneself to be seduced by them, is very difficult. The Sage needs, in this situation, the circumspection of the martin. This bird never perches anywhere that its piercing eye has judged unsafe. When it misses its prey, it neither stops nor turns back, but continues its flight. It lives amongst human habitations, but always in mistrust of their inhabitants.' - Yen Hui continued: '"There is no beginning that is not followed by an end;" what does that mean?' - Confucius said: 'All beings ceaselessly change their form, the giver of these forms being unknown and the rules that he follows being mysterious. What can one know of one's end? There is nothing to do but wait for what will come, holding oneself in a correct attitude.' - Yen Hui continued: '"Man is one with heaven;" what does that mean?' - Confucius said: 'To be a man, is to be heaven (an integral part of the universal norm). What prevents man from being one with heaven (melted in the mass with loss of his personality) is his own activity. Therefore the Sage abstains from acting, and abandons himself to the evolution which will absorb him, in the end, into the great whole.'

\*In reality I have no stable personality. I know neither who nor what I have been formerly. I know neither who nor what I am going to become. Succession of comings and goings, of and in the great whole.

H. When Zhuang Zi was poaching in the Diao Ling hunting reserve, a great bird came flying from the south. Its wings were seven feet long. Its eyes were more than a thumb's length in circumference. It passed so close to Zhuang Zi that its wing touched his head, and it alighted in a copse of chestnuts. Zhuang Zi ran after it, arming his cross-bow. On a shaded tree-trunk a cicada was taking the air, absorbed in its music. A preying mantis attacked it. The great bird fell on the two, which gave Zhuang Zi the chance to take it. Whilst he was picking it up, he thought to himself how egoism and antagonism bring beings, who have nevertheless one and the same nature, to destroy each other... As he was coming out of the wood he was almost caught by the gamekeeper for poaching. - Back home, Zhuang Zi shut himself in for three months. His disciple Lin Zi asked him the reason for this long confinement. He said: 'I have used this time to convince myself that, in order to live a long time, one must not fight with the others, but do and think like everyone else. Always doing battle, one ends up defeated in one's turn. I have learnt this from the gamekeeper of Diao Ling\*.'

I. Master Yang (Yang Zhu), who was travelling in the Principality of Song, passed the night at an inn. The innkeeper had two wives, one beautiful, the other ugly. The ugly one was well liked; the beautiful was not. - 'Why is this so?' asked Master Yang. - 'Because,' said a little servant to him, 'the beautiful one knows she is beautiful, and poses, which makes us deliberately ignore her beauty; whereas the ugly one knows she is ugly, and effaces herself, which makes us deliberately ignore her ugliness.' - 'Remember this, disciples,' said Master Yang. 'Excelling without making one's excellence felt, is the way that makes one liked everywhere.'

\*The cicada, the mantis, the bird, the archer, the gamekeeper, represent the philosophical and political schools of the time, always fighting one another. The cicada is Confucius, hypnotized by his monotonous song. The contemplative and mordant mantis is Lao Zi. Zhuang Zi's three months in retreat will not change him. He remains critical and combative.

Chapter 21. Transcendent Action.

A. Tian Zifang, who assisted Marquis Wen of Wei, often quoted Xi Gong. 'Was he your master?' asked the marquis. - 'No,' said Tian Zifang. 'We come from the same village. I have often been struck by the justice of his discourses. That is why I quote him.' - 'Then,' said the marquis, 'you didn't have a master?' - 'Of course I did.' - 'Who then?' asked the marquis. - 'Master Shun of the eastern suburb.' - 'If he was your master,' said the marquis, 'why do you never quote his words?' - 'Because he does not speak,' said Tian Zifang. 'He is a transcendent man, heaven in human form. Empty of all inessential things, he mothers transcendence in himself. Well disposed towards all, when anyone acts incorrectly, he makes them notice it by his correct attitude, so correcting them without words. You can see now why I cannot quote him.' - When Tian Zifang left, Marquis Wen remained quite dumbfounded, and did not say a word for the rest of the day. He then called his ordinary confidants and said to them: 'How different the man of perfect virtue is. I had believed till now that the study of the words of the Sages and the scholars, and the practice of goodness and fairness, were quite the ideal (Confucianism). But since I have heard Tian Zifang speak, I am all undone and as though paralysed; I can no longer open my mouth. Everything I have learnt till now is without foundation. The marquisate, with its worries which prevent me from giving myself up to Daoism, has become odious to me.'

B. Master Xue, Count of Wen (a Daoist), travelling from the south to Qi, passed by the capital of Lu, the land of Confucius, where several people asked to see him... 'What's the good of it?' he said. 'The learned men of this land only study conventional rites, and not human nature. I do not wish to see them.' - When he came back from Qi, Master Xue stopped once more in Lu, and the same people asked again to see him, so he received them in the guest-room, and then returned to his apartment sighing. The next day, a new visit and another sigh after the visit. Intrigued, the disciple who served Master Xue, asked him: 'Why do you sigh like that, each time you receive visitors?' - 'Because,' said Master Xue, 'I convince myself more and more, that the learned men of this land, very well informed in the matter of conventional rites, understand nothing of human nature. My visitors have made their entrances and exits in the most carefully studied and measured way, with the airs of dragons and tigers. Then, instead of asking me anything, they have reproached me like masters and lectured me as fathers (superiors). That is why I sighed.' - Confucius (about to be converted to Daoism, and represented here as more perspicacious than the other learned men of Lu), went also to see Master Xue, and withdrew without having said a word... 'Why did you keep silent?' asked

his disciple Zi Lu... 'Because,' said Confucius, 'it was enough for me to look at this man. The superior science (transcendence) flashes from his eyes and penetrates; words cannot explain it.'

C. Yen Yuan (the favourite disciple) said to Confucius (completely converted to Daoism): 'Master, when you walk, I follow your walking; when you trot, I follow at a trot; when you gallop, I follow at a gallop; but when you take off and leave the ground, I can only follow by watching you.' - 'Explain yourself, Hui,' said Confucius. - 'It is like this, said Yen Hui. 'walking is your discourse; I can follow it. The trot is your reasoning; I can follow that. The gallop is your speculation; I can follow it. But what I cannot come to grasp, is the transcendent (Daoist) influence by which you persuade, you win. What is it?' - Confucius said: 'It is the fascination exercised by my superior self, my part of the universal norm, on the self, the part of the norm of my listener, if he has not extinguished it. Meditate well on that! The death of the heart (extinction of the norm) is the most lamentable of deaths, much worse than the death of the body. The man whose heart lives, acts on the hearts of those who live, in the manner of the sun which vivifies the world. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. It shines on all beings, who all turn towards it. Their action begins with its appearance, and they become inert with its disappearance. Such is the diurnal rhythm, day and night. The rhythm of life and death resembles it. Time after time, the being dies and lives again. When it receives a definitive form, it keeps it so until the end of that existence, the period of day during which it acts. Then comes death, the period of night during which it rests; and so on, without interruption, like the chain of time. It becomes a being again as a function of its merit, but knows only (in its new existence) that it is such through destiny, without being able to measure its preceding mass (the mass of moral antecedents, the karma that weighs on it). At the end of this existence, beings that were in intimate contact (shoulder to shoulder), leave one another with sadness. Those who survive seek to know the state of the defunct, which is clearly in vain, for he has ceased to be himself. Inquiring after him, is therefore like looking for one's horse at the fair (stolen, and already with a new master). Mourning for another shows a grave doctrinal oversight, (forgetting that the other no longer exists in his preceding personality). One should not look on the cessation of personality as a misfortune, for the annihilation is not total. The physical self has ceased to be, it is true, and it would be an error to think of it as existing. But the transcendent self (the part of the norm that was in this person) subsists, and one can think of it as existing... It is through this almost impersonal transcendent self that I act on my audience. It is not unpleasant, like the personal self of the man named Confucius.'

D. Confucius went to visit Lao Dan and found him sitting motionless, carried away in ecstasy. The transport had seized him whilst he was drying his hair, after his ablutions\*. Confucius waited discreetly until he came to, and then said: 'You had left things and men, you had withdrawn yourself into the isolation of the self.' - 'Yes,' said Lao Dan. 'I was frolics in the origin of things.' - 'What does that mean?' asked Confucius. - 'I have not yet fully recovered,' said Lao Dan; 'my tired mind is not yet free to think, my closed mouth can scarcely articulate; however I will try to satisfy you... When the two modalities of being are differentiated in the primordial being, their gyration begins, and cosmic evolution follows. The highest point of the yin (condensed in the earth) is peaceful passivity. The highest point of the yang (condensed into heaven) is fecund activity. The passivity of the earth offers itself to heaven, and heaven's activity acts on it, producing all beings. An invisible force, the action and reaction of the heaven-earth binomial, produces all evolution. Beginning and ending, fullness and emptiness, astronomical revolutions, phases of the sun and moon; these things are produced by the same unique cause, which no one sees, but which functions always. Life develops itself towards an end, death is a return towards a term. Beginnings succeed one another without cease, without one knowing the origin, without one seeing the end. The action and reaction of heaven and earth is the unique motor of this movement. In this is beauty, supreme joy. It is the lot of the superior man to frolic in this rapture.' - 'But how may one reach that?' asked Confucius. - 'Through absolute indifference,' replied Lao Dan. 'The animals that populate the steppes are not attracted by a particular pasture; the fish living in the water do not hold themselves to any fixed habitat; in consequence, no displacement upsets their peace. All beings form an immense whole. He who is united with this unity, even so far as to have lost the awareness of his personality, who considers his body as he considers dust, life and death as day and night; what is there that can move this man, for whom gain and loss, happiness and misfortune, are nothing? He despises ranks like mud, because he knows more noble things than these. No vicissitude can touch one who has this nobility of self. Of all possible changes, none can alter his peace. He who has reached the Principle, understands this.' - 'Ah,' said Confucius amazed, 'here is a teaching as great as heaven and earth; can it be summed up in some formula, after the manner of the ancients?' - Lao Dan replied: 'Springs well up naturally. The superior man is such spontaneously. Heaven is high, the earth is deep, the sun and moon are luminous, all without formulae.' - When he was outside, Confucius told all this to his disciple Yen Hui. 'Until now,' he said, 'I have known as much about the Principle as the worms that live in

\*Compare with chapter 3 A.



vinegar. If the master had not lifted the veil covering my eyes, I would never have caught a glimpse of the perfect complex of heaven and earth (the great cosmic unity).'

**E.** Whilst Zhuang Zi was visiting Duke Ai of Lu, the latter said to him: 'There are many scholars in the Duchy of Lu, but none, Master, are comparable with you.' - 'There are only a few scholars in the Duchy of Lu,' replied Zhuang Zi. - 'How can you say that?' said the duke, 'when everywhere one sees men wearing academic costume.' - 'The costume, yes,' said Zhuang Zi. 'They announce by their round bonnet that they know the things of heaven; by their square shoes that they know the things of earth; by their sonorous pendants that they know how to create harmony everywhere. Some know all of these things without wearing the costume. These wear the costume, without knowing the things. If you do not believe me, make an experiment; forbid, by edict, under pain of death, the wearing of this costume by anyone who has not the competence.' - Duke Ai did this. Five days later, all but one of the scholars of Lu had changed their dress. The duke himself questioned this unique person on the government of the state. He replied to everything pertinently, without any possibility of being brought down. - 'You were saying,' said Zhuang Zi to the duke, 'that there were many scholars in the Duchy of Lu; one is not very many.'

**F.** Bo Li Xi had no interest in rank and wealth. He set himself to raising cattle and produced superb beasts, his natural instinct revealing to him how to treat them according to their nature. Seeing this, Duke Mu of Qin made him his minister, so that he should develop his people. - Shun neither loved life nor feared death; this made him worthy and capable of governing men.

**G.** Prince Yuan of Song desired a map and the scribes who had been summoned presented themselves, received their instructions, saluting; then, those who were discouraged went away; the others licked their brushes and stirred their ink, with a thousand airs and graces. One scribe who had come late with a nonchalant air, also received his instructions, saluted, and immediately retired to his cell. The duke sent to see what he was doing. They ascertained that he was at his ease, stripped to the waist, his legs crossed, and beginning by resting himself. When the duke heard this, he said: 'This one will succeed; he is a man who knows how to go about things\*.'

**H.** Whilst King Wen, the ancestor of the Zhou family, was in Zang, he saw a man fishing with a rod and line, nonchalantly, mechanically, nature alone acting in him, without any admixture of passion.

\*One only succeeds on condition of letting one's nature act. The opposite hinders success.

King Wen resolved to make him his minister as soon as possible. But having thought later of his parents' and officials' discontent, he tried to drive this idea out of his head. It was impossible! The fear that his people would be separated from heaven (without a minister who would govern them naturally, like heaven), made him unable to forget his plan. He then thought of the following means. In the morning, having called his officials together, he said to them: 'Last night I dreamt of a man of good appearance, suntanned and bearded, mounted on a saddled horse whose hoofs were painted red, who called out to me: "Hand over your power to the man of Zang, and your people will benefit from it."' - Greatly moved, the officials exclaimed: 'It is the late king, your father, who has appeared to you.' - 'Then,' said King Wen, 'should we consult the carapace of the tortoise on this matter?' - 'No,' said the officials unanimously. 'A verbal order from the late king should not be questioned.' - King Wen therefore sent for his fisherman, and put him in charge of the government. The latter changed nothing, made no rules, and gave no orders. Three years later, when King Wen inspected his kingdom, he ascertained that brigands had disappeared, officials had integrity, and feasts were respected. The people were united, civil servants did their tasks, and feudal chiefs did not trespass. Then King Wen treated the man of Zang as his master, seated him facing south, himself standing before him facing north, and asked him: 'Could you not do for an empire the good that you have done for a kingdom?' - The man of Zang replied only by a frightened look. He disappeared before the evening of that same day. They never learnt what became of him. - However a detail of this story shocked the honest Yen Yuan. 'How could King Wen cite a dream that he had not had?' he asked Confucius. - 'Shut up,' said Confucius. 'Everything King Wen did was well done. You should not judge this man. Naturally straight and honest, in this case he had to bend himself to circumstances\*.'

I. Lie Yukou (Lie Zi) was practising archery in the presence of Bo Hun Wu Ren. He held his bow so surely that a cup full of water attached to his left elbow did not spill when he let his arrow fly. His right hand was so active that an arrow was scarcely in flight before the next was in place. And during all this time his body remained upright like a statue (the ideal of an archer of the old school)... 'That,' said (the Daoist) Bo Hun Wu Ren, 'is the art of an archer, of a man who wants to shoot, of a man who knows that he is shooting (art, not nature). Come with me to the mountains, to the edge of an abyss, and let's see what remains of your posturing.' - They went together up a high mountain, to the edge of a precipice which dropped more than a hundred times a man's

\*Confucian opportunism overriding morality. Confucius is not well converted. He is out of his depth here.

height. Bo Hun Wu Ren placed himself on the edge with his heels projecting outwards. Held only by the fore part of his feet, he bowed to Lie Yukou, and invited him to take his place alongside him. But vertigo had already made the latter crouch on all fours, the sweat running down to his feet. Bo Hun Wu Ren said to him: 'The superior man takes his gaze as far as the limit of the blue heavens, into the depths of the earthly abysses, to the extremities of the horizon, without his vital spirit being moved in the slightest. He who has not reached this point is not a superior man\*. Looking at your drawn eyes, you give me the impression of having vertigo.'

J. Jian Wu said to Sunshu Ao: 'You have held office three times without exalting yourself, and you have been dismissed three times without being affected. At first I suspected you were pretending to be indifferent. But, convinced that during these events your breathing remained perfectly calm, I believe now that you are truly indifferent. What did you do to achieve this state?' - 'I did nothing at all,' said Sunshu Ao. 'Neither my nominations nor my degradations have meant anything to me. These events have caused me neither gain nor loss, that is why I was neither exalted nor affected. What could be extraordinary about all that? On the contrary, nothing could be more natural. My post was not myself, my self was not my post. Favour and disfavour concerned my position, not myself. Then why should I worry and tire myself out by being preoccupied with such things? Would I not have wasted my time by thinking of the praise and blame of men?' - Confucius heard about this reply, and said: 'There you have a true man of old. The ancients of this stamp did not allow themselves to be impressed by the discourses of the learned, nor to be seduced by the charms of beauty, nor to be intimidated by threats of violence. Fu Xi and the Yellow Emperor courted their friendship in vain. Neither love of life nor fear of death, motives so strong amongst common men, could make an impression on them. Then what effect could wealth and rank have on them? Their spirit was higher than the mountains, more profound than an abyss. What did it matter to them if their social position was the lowest? Since the entire universe was theirs through their union with the universal cosmos, conceding rank and wealth to common men did not impoverish them; the great whole remained as theirs.'

K. The King of Chu was speaking with the deposed Prince of Fan. The courtesans said: 'Fan has already been ruined three times.' - The Prince of Fan interrupted them: 'The ruin of Fan has not cost me my life. It is not certain that the prosperity of Chu will preserve your lives for you. Do not rely on the present prosperity

\*Any physical perturbation is a symptom of imperfection of nature. Compare with Lie Zi, chapter 2E.

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so far as to believe you are protected from future ruin. Prosperity and ruin alternate. If we place ourselves in the highest position, above the wheel that turns, Fan is not destroyed, Chu is not prosperous. Everything, alternately, passes through two phases of prosperity and ruin.'

## Chapter 22. Knowledge Of The Principle.

**A.** Knowledge went north as far as the Black Sea and climbed the Mountain of Obscurity, where she met Inaction. Knowledge said to Inaction: 'I have something to ask you. How can one come to know the Principle? What position should one take, and what should one do to understand it? Where should one start and which way should one follow in order to reach it?' - Inaction did not reply to these three questions. Not because she did not wish to reply, but because, in truth, she did not know how to reply. - Obtaining no reply, Knowledge went as far as the White Sea and climbed the Mountain of Investigation, where she saw Abstraction, and asked her these same three questions. 'Ah,' said Abstraction, 'I will tell you' - but just as she was going to speak, she forgot what it was all about. - Disappointed, Knowledge went to the Imperial Palace and put these three questions to the Yellow Emperor. The latter said to her: 'In order to know the Principle, it is above all necessary not to think or reflect. To understand it, no position should be taken, nothing must be done. To reach it, one should begin at no precise point, and one should follow no fixed way.' - 'Well,' said Knowledge, 'from amongst them and us, who acted the best?' - 'Inaction,' said the Yellow Emperor, 'because she said nothing at all. Then Abstraction, who barely spoke about it. We two were wrong in speaking. The saying goes: "He who knows does not speak (because he knows he cannot explain what he knows); he who speaks shows that he does not know." The Sage does not speak, even in order to teach. The Principle cannot be reached, its action cannot be grasped. All that which may be taught and learnt, such as goodness, fairness, rites; all such things are posterior and inferior to the Principle; these things were only invented when the true notion of the Principle and its action was lost, at the beginning of the decadence. The saying goes: "He who imitates the Principle, diminishes his action day by day, until he comes no longer to act at all." When he has reached that (pure non-intervention), he is equal to any task. But to travel back thus as far as the origin, is something very difficult, and only the superior man can succeed in it. - Life follows death, death is the origin of life. The why and wherefore of this alternation is inscrutable... The life of a man depends on a condensation of matter, whose dissipation will be his death; and so on, successively. This being so, is there any point in being saddened by anything?.. All beings form a whole which is transformed without cease. Some are called beautiful, others ugly. An abuse of words, for nothing lasts. On its next metamorphosis, perhaps that which is beautiful will become ugly, and that which was ugly will become beautiful... This is summed up by the saying: "All the universe has one and the same underlying substance." The Sage neither praises nor blames any particular being, and gives

all his praise to the cosmic unity, the great whole.' - (*What follows appears to be an intercalated fragment*). Summing up his conversation with the Yellow Emperor, Knowledge said: 'Inaction was not able to reply; Abstraction forgot to reply; you replied and then retracted your reply'... 'Yes,' said the Yellow Emperor. 'One can say nothing of the Principle. He who speaks of it is wrong.' - Inaction and Abstraction heard about the Yellow Emperor's reply and considered it to be good.

**B.** Heaven and earth, so majestic, are dumb. The course of the stars and seasons, so regular, is not deliberate. The evolution of beings follows an immanent, non-formulated law. Imitating these models, the superior man, the True Sage, does not intervene, does not act, but lets everything follow its course. The transcendent heaven-earth binomial presides over all transformations, the succession of lives and deaths, the mutations of all beings, without any of these beings having an explicit knowledge of the first cause of all these movements, of the Principle which makes everything persist since the beginning. The immensity of space is the go-between of heaven and earth. The least straw owes its existence to heaven and earth. Heaven and earth preside over the continual evolution of beings, which time after time are raised up or put down; over the regular rotation of the yin and the yang, of the four seasons, etc. From amongst beings, some seem to disappear, but continue nevertheless to exist; others, through having lost their bodies, only become more transcendent. Heaven and earth nourish all beings without their knowing it. From this idea of the universe, we can go back to the confused knowledge of its cause, the Principle. This is the only way. One can say of the Principle only that it is the origin of everything, that it influences everything whilst remaining indifferent.

**C.** Nie Que asked Pi Yi to explain the Principle to him. Pi Yi said to him: 'Control your habits, concentrate your perception, and universal harmony will spread into you. Withdraw your faculties, unify your thoughts, and the vital spirit of the universe will live as a prolongation in you. The action of the Principle, communicating itself to you, will become the principle of your qualities. You will live in the Principle. You will acquire the simplicity of a new-born calf, and cease to preoccupy yourself with what you are and where you have come from'... Before Pi Yi had finished his discourse, Nie Que had fallen into a profound sleep (carried away in ecstasy). Astonished, Pi Yi sang: 'See how his body has become like dead wood, and his heart like dead ashes. Having become transcendent, his true science no longer hesitates. Having become blind, his mind no longer debates. He has reached the intuition of the Principle. What a man!'

D. Shun asked his minister Cheng: 'Can one come to possess the Principle?' - Cheng replied: 'Not possessing your own body, how can you aspire to possess the Principle?' - 'If my body is not mine, whose is it?' asked Shun. - 'Your body,' said Cheng, 'is a loan of gross matter, which heaven and earth have lent you for a time. Your life is a transitory combination of subtle matter, which you owe also to heaven and earth. Your destiny, your activity, form an integral part of the flux of beings, under the action of heaven and earth. Your children and grandchildren are a renewal (literally, a change of skin) that heaven and earth have given you. You go forward in life without knowing what pushes you, you eat without knowing how you assimilate; the powerful and unknowable action of heaven and earth moves you in everything; and you wish to appropriate something to yourself?'

E. Confucius said to Lao Dan: 'As I have some spare time today, I would very much like to hear you speak on the essence of the Principle.' - Lao Dan said: 'You should first of all have lightened (illuminated) your heart by abstention, purified your vital spirit, and rid yourself of preconceived ideas. For the subject is abstruse, difficult to express and to understand. Nevertheless I will try to tell you something about it... The luminous is born from darkness, forms are born from the undifferentiated. The (universal) vital spirit, (in which particular vital spirits are participants), is born of the Principle; the first matter is born from the (universal) sperm, (of which particular sperm is a participant). Then, beings are mutually engendered, by communication of their matter, either by uterine gestation or production of eggs. Their entrance on the scene of life is not noticed, their leaving makes no noise. There is no visible door, no fixed abode. Contingent and ephemeral, beings come from all sides, and fill up the immensity of the world. Those who understand this, preoccupy themselves with nothing, keep themselves well, have a free mind, and conserve their organs of sense in perfect condition\*. Without tiring their intelligence, they are capable of any task. For they act (or rather do not act, but allow action) spontaneously, naturally, just as (by nature) heaven is elevated, the earth is extended, the sun and moon are luminous, just as beings bustle about naturally... Study and debate do not belong to the Principle, and therefore Sages abstain from these things. Knowing that the Principle is an infinity which can be neither augmented nor diminished, the Sages content themselves to embrace it in its entirety... Yes, it is immense like the ocean. What majesty in this incessant revolution, in which endings are immediately followed by new beginnings... To follow the flux of beings by doing good to all, is the way of ordinary (Confucian)

\*Blindness, deafness, for the Daoists, are a premature wearing out, through immoderate use of the vital force.

Sages. But to take a position outside this flux, and to do good to those he leads, is the way of the superior (Daoist) Sage (who acts like the Principle). - Let us consider a human being in the early embryonic state, whose sex is not yet determined. It has developed between heaven and earth. Scarcely developed, it may happen that it returns to its origin (is still-born). Considered in this beginning, is it anything other than a mixture of breath and sperm? And if it survives, it will only be for a few years. The difference between what one calls a long, and a short life, is so small! Summed up, it is a moment in the infinite course of time. Many have not even the leisure to show if they have the mind of a Yao (virtuous emperor) or of a Jie (vicious tyrant). - The evolution of each individual of the plant kingdom follows a determined law. Likewise the law that presides over human evolution is like a meshwork of gears. The Sage follows the movement, without kicking, without being attached. To look ahead and calculate, is an artifice; to let oneself be, is to follow the Principle. It was through letting be that the emperors and kings of great antiquity became elevated and famous. - The passage of man between heaven and earth, from life to death, is like the jump of a white steed across a ravine; an affair of an instant. Just as beings enter into life by a spurting forth; likewise they enter into death through a draining away. One transformation has made them living, one transformation has made them dead. All living beings find death unpleasant; men cry over it. And yet, what other thing is it but the unstringing of the bow and its return to its sheath; the emptying of the corporeal sack and the liberation of the two souls that were imprisoned in it? After the difficulties and vicissitudes of life, the two souls leave, the body follows them into rest. This is the great return (souls and body returning into the whole). This notion of perpetual gyration, of the incorporeal producing the corporeal, of the body returning to incorporeity, is known to many men, but only the elite draw practical consequences from it. Common people willingly discuss this subject, whereas the superior man keeps a profound silence. If he tried to speak about it, he would go against his science, through which he knows that to speak of it is impossible, and that one can only meditate on it. To understand that one gains nothing by questioning about the Principle, but that one must contemplate it in silence, is to have what is called the great result (to have reached the goal)\*.'

F. Dong Guo Zi said to Zhuang Zi: 'Where is the Principle?' - 'Everywhere,' said Zhuang Zi. - 'For example?' asked Dong Guo Zi. - 'For example, in this blade of grass.' - 'And lower?' - 'In this

\*Thus Confucius is dismissed from his questioning and referred to contemplation, which his busy political life makes him incapable of doing.



fragment of tile.' - 'And lower?' - 'In this piss and dung,' said Zhuang Zi. - Dong Guo Zi asked no further. - Then Zhuang Zi, taking up the conversation, said to him: 'Master, questioning like that will get you nowhere. Such a procedure is too imperfect. It is like that of the market experts who summarily judge the fatness of a pig by pressing a foot on it (the foot making a more, or less, deep imprint according to whether the pig is fat or lean). Do not ask if the Principle is in this or that. It is in all beings. That is why it is given the epithets great, supreme, entire, universal, total. All these different terms apply to one and the same reality, to the cosmic unity. - Let us transport ourselves in spirit, beyond this universe of dimensions and places, and there is no longer a question of situating the Principle. Let us transport ourselves outside the world of activity, into the realm of inaction, indifference, rest, the void, simplicity, leisure, and harmony, and there will no longer be a question of wishing to qualify the Principle. It is the indeterminate infinite. It is a waste of time wishing to reach it, to situate it, and to study its movements. No science goes that far. That which has caused all beings to be beings (the Principle), is not itself subject to the same laws as beings. That which has caused all beings to be limited (the Principle), is itself unlimited, infinite. It is therefore stupid to ask where it may be found. - As for evolution and its phases, plenitude and vacuity, prosperity and decadence, the Principle produces this succession, but is not this succession. It is the author of causes and effects, but not the causes and effects. It is the author of condensations and dissipations (births and deaths), but it is not itself condensation nor dissipation. Everything comes from it, and evolves by, and under, its influence. It is in all beings, through a termination of the norm; but it is not identical with beings, since it is neither differentiated nor limited.'

**G.** A He Gan and the future emperor Shen Nong were studying under Lao Long Ji. Seated on a stool, Shen Nong was taking his siesta indoors. A He Gan pushed the door open, and announced to him point-blank that their master had just died. Shen Nong got up in one movement, dropped his staff, burst out laughing and said: 'Perhaps he died out of desperation, through not having been able to elevate me with his grand phrases?' - The Daoist Yen Gang who had come to offer his condolences, heard these words and said to Shen Nong: 'The study of the Principle draws the best minds of the empire. You have what it takes to apply yourself to it. For, without having learnt anything, you have found out for yourself, as is witnessed by your outburst on the death of your master, that grand phrases do not give intelligence, which is a fundamental Daoist axiom. The Principle is attained neither by sight nor hearing. One may only say of it that it is mystery. He who speaks about it,

shows that he does not understand it.'

**H.** Purity said to Infinity\*: 'Do you know the Principle?' - 'I do not know it,' said Infinity. - Then Purity said to Inaction: 'Do you know the Principle?' - 'I know it,' said Inaction. - 'By reflection or intuition?' asked Purity. - 'By reflection,' said Inaction. - 'Explain yourself,' said Purity. - 'It is like this,' said Inaction. 'I think that the Principle is the confluence of contrasts, nobility and baseness, collection and dispersion; I know it therefore by reflection.' - Purity went along to consult the Primordial State. 'Which one,' he asked, 'replied best? Who was right and who was wrong?' The Primordial State said: 'Infinity said, "I do not know the Principle;" this reply is profound. Inaction said, "I know the Principle;" this reply is superficial. Infinity was right to say that he knew nothing of the essence of the Principle. Inaction was able to say that she knew it, as far as its exterior manifestations.' - Struck by this reply, Purity said: 'Ah! Then not to know it is to know it (its essence), to know it (its manifestations) is not to know it (such as it is in reality). But how can one understand that it is through not knowing it that one knows it?' - 'It is like this,' said the Primordial State. 'The Principle cannot be understood; what is understood is not it. The Principle cannot be seen, what is seen is not it. The Principle cannot be expressed, what is expressed is not it. Can one conceive other than by reason (not by imagination), the non-sentient being that has produced all sentient beings? No, without doubt! In consequence the Principle which is this non-sentient being, not being imaginable, cannot further be described. Remember this well: He who asks questions about the Principle, and he who replies, show both that they are ignorant of what the Principle is. One cannot ask nor reply concerning what the Principle is. Vain questions, inept replies, which imply that those who make them are ignorant of what the universe is and of what was the great origin. Such people will not elevate themselves beyond the terrestrial heights (of Mount Kun Lun). They will not reach the absolute void of perfect abstraction.'

**I.** Diffuse Light asked Formless (the infinite, indeterminate being, the Principle): 'Do you exist, or do you not?' - She heard no reply. - Having stared at him for a long time, she only saw an obscure void, in which, despite all her efforts, she could distinguish nothing, could perceive nothing, could grasp nothing. 'This is the highest point,' she said; 'it is impossible to inquire about this state. Ideas of being and nothingness are current. Non-being cannot be conceived of as existent. But here, existing, is Formless (the infinite, indeterminate being). This is the supreme height; it is the Principle.'

\*Compare with A above; an analogous piece.

**J.** At the age of eighty-four the man who forged swords for the ministry of war had still not lost his dexterity\*. The minister said to him: 'You are skilled; tell me your secret.' - 'It consists uniquely in always doing the same work,' replied the blacksmith. 'The taste for forging swords came to me when I was twenty. I only have eyes for that objective. I apply myself only to that. By dint of forging swords, I have ended by forging them without thinking of them. Whatever one does, when one does it without cease, it ends up by becoming unreflected, natural, spontaneous (and in consequence conforming to the unreflected and spontaneous influence of the Principle); such action succeeds always.'

**K.** Ran Qiu asked Confucius: 'Can one know what there was before heaven and earth were formed?' - 'Yes,' said Confucius; 'that which is now' (the eternal, immutable Principle). - Ran Qiu withdrew himself without asking more. The next day he went to see Confucius again, and said: 'Yesterday, I asked you what there was before heaven and earth, and you replied, "that which is now." At first I believed I understood; but since then, the more I think about it, the less I understand it. Please explain the meaning of your reply.' - Confucius said: 'Yesterday you used your faculty of natural apprehension (intuition which wells up in the void of the heart, says the commentary), and in consequence you grasped the truth of my proposition. But since then you have reasoned, using artificial logic, which has obscured the evidence of your first intuition. I said to you, "that which was is that which is." For there is no past and present, beginning and ending, with reference to the Principle, which is always in the present... But now it is my turn to ask you a question. Tell me, can there be children and grandchildren who have no parents, no grandparents?' - As Ran Qiu remained speechless, Confucius said to him: 'Amongst men, no. The human mode of engendering consists in determined beings communicating their principle of life to offspring of the same nature. Quite otherwise was the generation of heaven and earth (pseudo-children), and of all beings (pseudo-grandchildren, of the Principle). What was before heaven and earth (the Principle), was it a determined being, having a form and shape? No... That which determines all beings (the Principle) was not itself a determined being. This was the primordial indeterminate being of whom I said, "that which was is that which is." It logically refutes that sentient beings have been produced by other sentient beings in an indefinite chain.' (This chain had a beginning, the Principle, the non-sentient, whose influence extends since its unfolding).

**L.** Yen Yuan said to Confucius: 'Master, I have often heard you say that one should not preoccupy oneself with relationships nor worry

\*Cf. chapter 3 B.

about such things. What does this mean?' - Confucius replied: 'The ancient peoples remained impassive amongst the vicissitudes of life, because they kept themselves outside the flux. The moderns, on the contrary, follow the flux, and are in consequence tormented by diverse interests. There is, above the transformations, a unity (a Principle) which remains immobile, indifferent, non-differentiated, non-multiplied. It is from this unity that the ancients, the true Sages, took their model. It was of this that they conversed in the park of Xi Wei, in the Yellow Emperor's garden, in Shun's palace, and the residences of Emperors Tang and Wu.' - *Interpolation*: Later, those who were called scholars, the masters amongst the Confucians and Mo-ists, took themselves to disputing on yes and no. Nowadays discussions are general. The ancients did not act like that. - 'Just like unity itself, the ancients were calm and neutral. As they wounded no one, no one wished them ill. This unique rule of not making enemies, sufficed them in the matter of relationships.'

**M.** (*An additional fragment, probably displaced*)... 'When I rejoice at the sight of the wooded mountains, of the high plateaux, sadness suddenly comes to trouble my joy. Happiness and sadness come and go in my heart, without my being able to govern them. I can neither retain the one, nor protect myself from the other. Alas! Must the heart of man be thus a shelter for all comers? One can prevent certain things, but others cannot be prevented. The unpredictable, the fatal; there is no remedy against these two ills. Whomsoever tries to struggle against them, makes himself even more unhappy, failure being certain in the struggle for the impossible. There is therefore only to submit oneself to destiny, which derives from the Principle. Silence is the best use one can make of the faculty of speech. Doing nothing is the best use one can make of the faculty of action. Learning nothing is the best use one can make of one's intelligence. Wishing to learn much, to know everything (like Confucius), is the worst of errors.'

## Chapter 23. Return To Nature\*.

A. Among the disciples of Lao Dan, a certain Geng Sang Chu went northwards, established himself at the foot of Mount Wei Lei, and taught disciples in his turn. For the love of Daoist simplicity he dismissed those of his servants who gave themselves intelligent airs, and kept away from those of his concubines who were refined, only keeping the rustic and weatherbeaten around himself. After three years, through the effect of his presence and his example, Wei Lei found prosperity. The people of the place said to each other: 'When Master Geng Sang established himself amongst us, we found it strange. That was because we did not know him well enough. Now that we have had time to get to know him, who amongst us does not consider him a Sage? Why don't we make him our local Sage, honouring him as one honours the representative of the dead, the genie of the sun and the one of the harvests, by reverence and offerings at certain times of the year?' - Geng Sang Chu learnt of these proposals. Seated in his school, in his position of master, he looked embarrassed. His disciples asked him why. 'Because,' he said, 'according to my master Lao Dan, if the spring brings the plants back to life and autumn makes the fruit ripen, these are natural effects produced by the great Principle operating in everything, and not from the merits of the seasons. Just like nature, the superior man should remain hidden (inside his house), and not allow the crowds to acclaim him. Now it happens that these little people of Wei Lei are thinking of giving me (a common man) the rank and offerings of a Sage. This embarrasses me, for I do not wish to contravene the teaching of my master Lao Dan.' - 'Have no fear,' said the disciples; 'you have the qualities, and the position is easy. A whale cannot turn round in a canal, but a small fish moves in it with ease. A buffalo would not be safe on a knoll, but a fox would live there quite well. And then, why shouldn't Sages be honoured, the able elevated, the good and useful distinguished? This has been the general rule since the days of Yao and Shun. Master, let these little people of Wei Lei do as they wish. Give in to their wishes.' - Geng Sang Chu said: 'Approach my children, that I may explain to you... Showing oneself is always deadly. Even an animal large enough to swallow a carriage, would not avoid nets and snares, were it to leave its hide-out in the mountains. Even a fish big enough to swallow a boat, would be eaten by the ants if it were grounded. It is for their own safety that birds and wild beasts seek the high places, fish and turtles the deep waters... In the same way the man who wishes to protect himself should hide in retreat and mystery... As for Yao and Shun, whom you have cited, their authority is null. What have they

\*The text of this chapter is very obscure. It seems to have suffered mutilation and transposition.

done for the good of humanity, these phrase-coiners, innovators, thinkers wholly occupied with vulgarities and trifles? They honoured the Sages; the finest way to make the people competitive. They elevated the skilled and able; the best way to make everyone brigands\*. Of all their inventions, none have given benefit to the people. Quite the contrary, they over-excited the people to egoism, a passion which makes parricides, regicides, thieves and pillagers. I tell you, all the disorders date from the reign of these two men. If their politics are continued, a day will come when men will devour each other.'

B. Nan Rong Zhu (a man already advanced in age, who had put himself in the school of Geng Sang Chu), assumed the most respectful posture, and asked him: 'At my age, what can I do to become a superior man?' - Geng Sang Chu said: 'See to it that your healthy body imprisons your vital spirit completely; do not let thoughts or images buzz inside you; if you do that for three whole years, you will obtain what you desire.' Nan Rong Zhu replied: 'All eyes appear alike, but those of the blind do not see. All ears appear the same, but those of the deaf do not hear. All hearts appear the same, and yet fools do not understand. In my body, I am made like you, but my mind must differ from yours. I cannot grasp the meaning of your words.' - 'That must be due to my incapacity to explain myself,' said Geng Sang Chu. 'A little fly can do nothing for a big sphinx. A little hen from Yue cannot incubate a goose egg. I have evidently not the ability to teach you the way. Why don't you go south and consult Lao Zi?'

C. Following Geng Sang Chu's advice, Nan Rong Zhu furnished himself with the necessary provisions, walked for seven days and nights, and arrived at the place where Lao Zi lived... 'Did Geng Sang Chu send you?' asked the latter. - 'Yes,' said Nan Rong Zhu. - 'Why have you brought such a large retinue\*\*\*?' asked Lao Zi. - Nan Rong Zhu looked behind himself, quite scared. - 'You did not understand my question,' said Lao Zi. - Nan Rong Zhu lowered his head in shame, then, having raised it, he sighed and said: 'Because I could not understand your question, do you forbid me to say what has brought me here?' - 'No,' said Lao Zi; 'go on.' - Then Nan Rong Zhu said: 'If I stay ignorant, men will scoff at me; if I become learned, it will be through wearing myself out. If I stay bad, I will do evil to others; if I become good, it will wear me out. If I do not practise fairness, I shall wound others; if I practise it, I shall harm myself. These three doubts torment me. What should I do, or not do? Geng Sang Chu has sent me to ask your advice.' -

\*Compare with Lao Zi chapter 3.

\*\*Of prejudices, attachments, passions, illusions, and errors.

Lao Zi said: 'At the first glance I clearly saw in your eyes that you had lost your head. You are like a man who tries to recover his drowned parents from the bottom of the sea. I pity you.' - Nan Rong Zhu was admitted to Lao Zi's household as a paying guest, and began a moral treatment. He applied himself first of all to fixing his qualities and eliminating his vices. After ten days of this exercise, which he found hard, he saw Lao Zi again, who asked him: 'Is the work of your purification advancing? It seems to me that it is not yet perfect. Troubles from outside (entered through the senses) can only be arrested by the opposition of an internal barrier (withdrawal). Troubles from within (coming from the mind) can only be barred by an external barrier (self-control). Even those who are advanced in the science of the Principle occasionally experience attacks from these two kinds of emotions, and still have to guard themselves against them; how much more so those like you who have lived a long time without knowing the Principle, and are little advanced.' - 'Alas,' said Nan Rong Zhu discouraged, 'when a peasant falls ill, he blames his illness on another, and finds himself at least relieved, if not cured. Whereas each time I consult on the great Principle, the ill that torments my heart increases, as though I had taken the wrong medicine. It is too much for me. Please give me the recipe to prolong my life; I will be content with that.' - 'And you think,' said Lao Zi, 'that it can be passed on just like that, from hand to hand? Prolonging life assumes many things. Are you capable of conserving your physical integrity, of not compromising it? Would you always be able to distinguish the favourable from the fatal? Would you be able to stop yourself, and abstain yourself, to the limit? Could you become disinterested in others, in order to become concentrated in your own interior? Could you come to keep your mind free and withdrawn? Could you return to the state of your first infancy? The newly-born baby cries day and night without becoming hoarse, so solid is its new nature. It does not let go of what it grasps, so concentrated is its will. It looks at length without blinking, nothing moving it. It moves without aim and stops without motive, spontaneously, without reflection. Being indifferent and following nature is the formula for prolonging life.' - 'All the formula?' asked Nan Rong Zhu... Lao Zi continued: 'That is just the beginning, what I call the thawing out, the breaking up of the ice, after which the river begins to take its course. The superior man lives, like other men, on the fruits of the earth, the gifts of good things from heaven. But he is attached neither to man nor things. Profit and loss leave him equally indifferent. Nothing offends him, nothing makes him rejoice. He glides, concentrated in himself. This is the formula for making one's life last.' - 'All the formula?' asked Nan Rong Zhu... Lao Zi went on: 'I have said that one must become again like a small child. Moving,

acting, the child has no aim, no intention. His body is indifferent like dead wood, his heart is inert like cold ashes. For him, there is neither happiness nor sadness. What harm can men do, to him who is above these two great vicissitudes of destiny? The superior man is he who is lodged in indifference.'

D. (*In what follows, it is probably Zhuang Zi who speaks*). He whose heart has reached this height of immutability, emits a natural light (pure reason, with nothing conventional) which reveals to him what still remains of the artificial within. Then he rids himself of this artificiality and becomes stable. With time, the artificial disappears completely, and only the natural remains. Men who have reached this state are called sons of heaven, heavenly people; that is to say they have returned to their natural state, become again what heaven had originally made them. - This cannot be learnt either by theory or practice, but only by intuition or exclusion. To stop there, where one can learn no more, (and to hold oneself, says the commentary, in indifference and inaction), is to be perfectly wise. He who should try to pass beyond (deciding, acting, chancing) will be broken by the fatal course of things (for he will inevitably enter into conflict with destiny). - When all provisions have been made and all precautions taken for the maintenance of the body, when one has not provoked another by any offence, then, if some misfortune comes along, it must be attributed to destiny, not men, and in consequence one should take care not to avoid it by having recourse to some baseness, and take care likewise not to be saddened in one's heart. It is in the power of man to seal the tower of his spirit (his heart); it is in his power to keep it sealed, on condition that he neither examines nor discusses what is presented to it, but simply refuses it access. - Each act of he who is not yet perfectly indifferent, causes disorder. The object of the act penetrates his heart, is lodged there, and will come out of it no more. With each new act there is a new disorder. - Whoever does evil in daylight will be punished by men; if done under cover of darkness, he will be punished by the shades. Reminding oneself that, when one is not observed by men, one is by invisible beings, makes for good behaviour, even in one's secret retreat. - Those who fear for their lives do not struggle in order to become famous. Those who burn with acquisitiveness spread their activities outside. The first are men of reason, the second are businessmen. One sees these men raising themselves on tiptoe, hoisting themselves up, striving to succeed. They are storehouses of preoccupations and worries. They are so full of them, that there is no longer room, in their hearts, even for the love of their fellow beings. Therefore they are detested as being no longer men. - Of all the instruments of death, desire is the most murderous; the famous Mo Ye sword has not killed as many men. The worst assassins are, they say, the yin



and the yang, from whom no one escapes, out of all the men who populate the space between heaven and earth. And yet, in truth, if the yin and the yang kill men, it is because men's appetites deliver them up to these assassins.

E. The unique universal principle subsists in the multiplicity of beings, in their beginnings and endings. All distinct beings are such through accidental and temporary differentiation (individuation) from the Whole, and their destiny is to return again into this Whole, of which their essence is a participation. Of this return, the common people say that the living who, having died, do not find their way, wander as phantoms; and that those who, having died, have found the way, are defunct (extinguished). Survival, extinction, these are two ways of speaking of an identical return, which comes from their having applied notions proper to sentient beings, to the state of being non-sentient. The truth is that, come out by their emergence from formlessness (the indeterminate being), returned by their death into formlessness, beings retain a reality (that of the universal Whole) but they have no longer a place; they keep a duration (that of the eternal Whole) but they no longer have time. Reality without place, duration without time, is the universe, the cosmic unity, the Whole, the Principle. It is in the bosom of this unity, that births and deaths, appearances and disappearances, are produced, silently and imperceptibly. They have called it the heavenly gate or the natural gate, the gateway of entrance and exit of existence. This gate is the non-being of form, the indefinite being. Everything comes out from it. The sentient being cannot be, in the last instance, the issue of the sentient being. It is necessarily issued from the non-being of form. This non-being of form is unity, the Principle. This is the secret of the Sages, the kernel of esoteric science. - In their dissertations on the origin, those of the ancients who had reached a superior degree of knowledge expressed three opinions. Some thought that the definite, infinite being, author of all limited beings, existed from all eternity. Others, doing away with the infinite being, thought that limited beings existed from all eternity, passing through alternating phases of life and death. Others, finally, thought that formlessness (the indefinite, infinite being) was first of all, from whom emanated all the finite beings, with their geneses and cessations. Indefinite being, genesis, cessation, these three terms hold together like the head, body, and tail of an animal. I (Zhuang Zi) support this thesis. For me, the indefinite being, all becomings, all endings, form a complex, a whole. I shake hands with those who think the same. However, strictly speaking, the three opinions stated above can be reconciled. They are related like the branches of one and the same tree. - The particular being is to the indefinite being, what the soot (palpable deposit) is to the (impalpable) smoke. When the soot

is deposited, there has been no new production, but only a passage from the impalpable to the palpable, soot being concrete smoke. And likewise, if this soot is redissipated in smoke, there will again only have been a conversion, without essential modification. I know that the term conversion, which I employ in order to express the succession of lives and deaths in the bosom of the Principle, is not in common usage; but I must speak thus, under pain of not being able to express myself at all... The disjointed members of a sacrificed cow, are a victim. Several rooms are a house. Life and death are a same state. From life to death, there is no transformation; there is a conversion. Philosophers become heated when it comes to defining the difference between these two states. For me, there is no difference; the two states are only one.

F. When one hurts someone, the closer that person is to one, the less one makes excuses. One asks pardon of a peasant stranger whose foot one has stepped on; but the father does not apologise to his son in the same situation. The highest of rites, is not to perform them. The highest expedience is to laugh at everything. The height of intelligence is to think of nothing. The height of sincerity is not to pay deposits. It is necessary to curb the digressions of appetite, correct the aberrations of the mind, and push aside all that hinders the free inflowing of the Principle. Wishing to be noble, rich, distinguished, respected, renowned, endowed, makes up the six appetites. Appearance, deportment, breathing, thought, cause mental aberrations. Antipathy, sympathy, complacency, anger, sadness, joy, hinder the free inflowing of the Principle. Repulsion and attraction, give and take, knowledge and ability, are so many obstacles. The interior from which these twenty-four causes of disorder have been eliminated, becomes regulated, calm, luminous, empty, non-acting, and capable of all things. - The Principle is the source of all active faculties, life is their manifestation, individual nature is a modality of this life, its movements are the acts, wasted acts are its faults. - The learned devise and speculate; and, when they are unable to see more clearly, they act like little children and stare at an object. Orderly action is acting only when one cannot do otherwise. Acting without being obliged to do so, is hazardous interference. Knowing and acting must go hand in hand.

G. Yi was a most able archer (artificial art), and extremely stupid by nature. Some people are naturally very wise, which has nothing to do with art. Nature is the base of everything. - Freedom belongs to natural perfection. It is not lost only through being literally imprisoned in a cage. Tang encaged Yi Yin by making him his cook. Duke Mu of Qin encaged Bo Li Xi by giving him five goatskins. They encage men by giving them what they like. All favours

enslave. - Freedom of mind calls for absence of interest. He who has been punished by having his feet cut off, no longer dresses himself up, because he can no longer make himself attractive. He who is going to be executed does not get vertigo at no matter what height; for he no longer has any fear of falling. The one has no further interest in making himself attractive, the other in conserving his life. - To return to the state of nature, one should renounce the friendship of men, and all the petty ways which serve to win friends and keep them. One should become indifferent to veneration and outrage; and hold oneself always in natural equilibrium. - One should be indifferent before making an effort, before acting; such that the effort, the action, arising from non-effort, non-action, is natural. - In order to enjoy peace, one should keep one's body in good order. In order that the vital spirit should function properly, one should put one's heart completely at ease. In order always to act well, one should come out from one's rest only when one cannot do otherwise. This is the Sages' way.

## Chapter 24. Simplicity.

A. When the learned Nü Shang had introduced the anchorite Xu Wugui to Marquis Wu of Wei, the marquis pronounced the words of interest required by the rites, saying: 'Your privations in the mountains and woods have no doubt debilitated you; you are no longer able to continue this kind of life and seek some social position; that is why you have come, isn't it?' - 'Not in the least,' said Xu Wugui; 'I have come to offer you my condolences. If you continue to let your passions ravage your interior, your vital spirit will be used up. If you decide to curb them, in view of the way you have given them free rein, you will have to discipline them very much. I offer you my condolences in either case.' - This discourse displeased the marquis, who looked at Xu Wugui haughtily, and did not reply. - Realising that the marquis was not capable of receiving the abstract Daoist teaching, Xu Wugui attempted to give it to him under a concrete form. 'Permit me to speak to you of another thing,' he said. 'I consider myself to be good at judging dogs. I hold those which are only interested in satisfying their voracity (the sensual types) as the inferior kind, those which bay at the sun (the intellectuals) as the medium kind, and finally, I consider that those which have an air indifferent to anything are the superior kind, for, once set on a trail, no distraction will make them deviate from it... I understand about judging horses also. I hold those that can describe clever geometrical figures worthy of a prince, those that charge to the end without fear of danger, to be made for an emperor... Marquis, rid yourself of preoccupations and distractions of an inferior order; apply yourself to the essential.' - Quite happy to have understood this simple discourse, Marquis Wu laughed loudly. - When Xu Wugui had come out, Nü Shang said to him: 'You are the first to have succeeded in pleasing our prince. I myself have spoken most eloquently to him of the Odes, Annals, Rites and Music, statistics and military art\*; never have I seen him smile enough to show his teeth. What did you speak about, to put him in such good humour?' 'I spoke to him about subjects that interest him, about dogs and horses,' said Xu Wugui. 'You know the story of that man from Yue, exiled in a far distant land. After several days, seeing a man of Yue gave him pleasure. After several years, seeing a man or an object which merely resembled those of his country, gave him pleasure; an effect of his growing nostalgia... For a man lost in the northern steppes, living amongst wild plants and beasts, to hear the footsteps of a man is a blessing; and how much more so when this man is a friend, a brother, with whom he can converse heart to heart... It was as a brother, through nature, that I spoke

\*The pet themes of the Confucians; mortally tedious.

to your prince. It was such a long time since this poor man, saturated with pedantic discourses, had heard the simple and natural words of another man. Therefore what joy he found when he understood them; an alleviation of his nostalgia.'

**B.** (*Another variation on the same theme*). Marquis Wu received Xu Wugui in audience and said to him: 'Master, you have lived a long time in the mountains and woods, feeding yourself on roots and chestnuts, onions and wild garlic. Now I see you are old and incapable of continuing this kind of life. The taste for wine and meat has no doubt returned to you. Have you not come to me to offer your advice for the good government of my marquisate, in order to have your share of these things\*?' - 'No,' said Xu Wugui, 'it is not for that. Accustomed as I am to privations since my childhood, I do not envy your wine, nor your meat. I have come to offer you my condolences.' - 'For what misfortune?' asked the marquis, astonished. - 'For the ruin of your mind and body,' said Xu Wugui... 'Heaven and earth extend a uniform influence to all beings, from the most elevated to the most humble, which helps them each to attain their natural perfection. Then why do you, lord of a marquisate, make your people suffer by your demands, to please your senses and ruin your body? Your spirit naturally conformed to the tendency of heaven and earth, cannot approve, and therefore suffers a violence which ruins it. It is for the double ruin of your mind and body that I offer you my condolences.' - Struck by this discourse, Marquis Wu said: 'I have wished you would visit me for a long time. I should like to practise goodness towards my people, and fairness towards my neighbours. What should I do?' - Xu Wugui said: 'Cease your constructions of forts, your manoeuvres and exercises, which impoverish your people and worry your neighbours. Stop purchasing plans of conquests and manuals of stratagems. Any war uses up the people, the enemy, and he who makes it through the anxieties it causes him. Just like heaven and earth, be benevolent to all, and do not injure anyone. Everyone will benefit, your people, your neighbours, and yourself.'

**C.** The Yellow Emperor was on his way to visit Da Wei on Mount Ju Ci, Fang Ming driving his chariot, Chang Yu acting as counter-weight, Zhang Ruo and Xi Peng walking in front, and Kun Hun and Hua Ji following behind. On the plain of Xiang Cheng the seven Sages lost their way. They met a boy who was tending some horses, and asked him if he knew where Mount Ju Ci was and where Da Wei lived. - 'I know that,' said the boy. - 'How can it be,' said the Yellow Emperor, 'that, without having learnt, this boy knows where Mount Ju Ci is, and knows Da Wei? Could he be a transcend-

\*Blow to the professional politicians of the times.

ent being?' - And the Yellow Emperor asked him what to do in order to govern the empire well. - 'As I do to govern my horses,' replied the boy; 'I do not consider that it is more difficult... Once, I used to walk only within the limits of space, and the multitude of individual beings that I had to look at caused me to wear out my eyes. Then an old man advised me to climb into the chariot of the sun, and walk on the plain of Xiang Cheng (to elevate myself beyond the world of individuals, to see everything from as high up as the sun). I have followed his advice, and my eyes are cured. I no longer walk except beyond the limits of real space, in universals, in abstraction... It is from this point of view that it seems to me that the empire can be governed as I govern my horses.' - The Yellow Emperor insisted that he explain himself further, and the mysterious boy said to him: 'I ward off from my horses what can be harmful to them; for the rest I let them do as they please. I think that, in the government of men, an emperor should limit himself to that.' Marvelling, the Yellow Emperor prostrated himself, touched the earth with his forehead, called the boy Heavenly Master, and then continued on his way.

D. It is in abstraction that one must look for the Principle. It is from the infinite that one must look at particular beings. Nowadays the majority of men do the opposite. - Philosophers lose themselves in their speculations, sophists in their distinctions, and seekers in their investigations. All these men are captive within the limits of space, blinded by particular beings. - Likewise those who court princes in order to obtain a post, who canvass the favour of the people, who force themselves in order to win prizes. Likewise ascetics who emaciate themselves in order to become famous; legalists, ceremonial officers, musicians, who push themselves in their party; and finally those who make a living out of the exercise of goodness and fairness (the Confucians). The peasant is absorbed by his work, the businessman by business, the craftsman by his craft, the common people by the small affairs of each day. - The more the circumstances are favourable, the more they submerge themselves in their speciality. At each setback, at each deception, they are afflicted. They follow a fixed idea, without ever accommodating themselves to things. They overwork their bodies and overwhelm their minds. And they do that throughout their lives, alas!

E. Zhuang Zi said to Hui Zi: 'From the fact that an archer hits by chance a target that he did not aim at, may we conclude that he is a good archer? And as such luck may come to anyone, may we conclude that all men are good archers?' - 'Yes,' said the sophist Hui Zi. - Zhuang Zi continued: 'From the fact that there is not, in this world, any notion of good accepted by everyone, each man

calling what pleases him good; may we conclude from this fact that all men are good?' - 'Yes,' said Hui Zi again. - 'Then,' said Zhuang Zi, 'it must be said also that the five contemporary schools, of Confucius, Mo Zi, Yang Zhu, Gongsun Long, and yourself, are all of them right at the same time. Now it cannot be that, at the same time, the truth resonates in five different harmonies. To someone who boasted of being able to produce warmth in winter and cold in summer, in front of Lu Ju, the latter said: "What great success, causing a rupture in the cosmic equilibrium. I do quite the opposite; I put myself in union with universal harmony. Come and see this"... Having tuned two lutes to the same note, Lu Ju placed one in an outer room and the other in an interior apartment. When he played the chord Gong on the one, the same chord vibrated on the other. It was the same for the chord Jue, and for the others. One lute made the other vibrate in unison, from a distance'... Zhuang Zi concluded: 'If Lu Ju had played a discordant note, not in conformity with the scale, the twenty-four strings of the other lute would not have all vibrated harmoniously, but jangled, this dissonance offending the established harmony of the strings. Thus it is with the five schools (five lutes each tuned to a different note). Each one makes the others go jingle-jangle. How could they be right, all five of them?' - 'That they make a jangling does not prove that one is wrong,' said Hui Zi. 'He who has the last word is right. For a long time the disciples of Confucius, Mo Zi, Yang Zhu, and Gongsun Long, have sifted my arguments, trying to deafen me by their cries. They have never been able to make me shut up; therefore I am right.' - 'Listen to this story,' said Zhuang Zi. 'In a moment of distress a man of Qi sold his only son to some people from Song, to be made into a eunuch. The same man conserved with veneration the vases used for making sacrificial offerings to his ancestors. He kept the offering vases, and suppressed by the castration of his son, the descendants who would have made the offerings. You act like this father, sophist; for you an expedient is everything, and the truth counts for nothing. - Listen once more to this story of the valet from Chu who had been charged by his master with an important mission. Having to cross the river at midnight in a ferry-boat, at a lonely place, he was unable to suppress his quarrelsome humour and argued with the ferryman, who threw him into the water. You will end up badly like that man, for seeking to quarrel with everyone for the pleasure of it.' Even after Hui Zi was dead, Zhuang Zi did not cease to persecute him with his gibes. They had placed a statue of him on his tomb. One day when, following a funeral procession, Zhuang Zi passed by it, he said, pointing at the statue: 'Look there at the speck of bird-lime on his nose'... And he ordered Shi the carpenter (who accompanied the procession in case repairs should be needed to the bier or coffin) to remove it. The carpenter whirled his axe in front of

the statue's nose, and the speck of bird-lime was blown away by the wind. Prince Yuan of Song learnt of this, and admired the carpenter's deftness. He said to him: 'Repeat your axe-whirl on my nose.' The carpenter excused himself, saying: 'I only dare do it on dead matter'... 'For me,' said Zhuang Zi, 'it is quite the contrary. Since Hui Zi died, I am no longer sure who to operate on'... (The axe represents Zhuang Zi's strong doctrine, the speck of bird-lime Hui Zi's small mind. When Zhuang Zi argued without his even touching Hui Zi, the small mind of the latter swooned away. - Commentary).

F. Guan Zhong (Guan Zi, seventh century B.C.) had fallen gravely ill, and Duke Huan of Qi, for whom he was the minister, went to see him and said: 'Father Zhong, your illness is grave. If it gets worse (if you should come to die), tell me to whom I should confide my duchy?' - 'You are the master,' said Guan Zhong. - 'Will Bao Shu Ya do?' asked the duke. - 'No,' said Guan Zhong. 'He is too much of a purist, too exacting. He will not rub shoulders with his inferiors. He will forgive no one their faults. If you make him minister, he will inevitably harm both his master and subjects. You would have to get rid of him before long.' - 'Then whom should I take?' asked the duke. - 'Since I must speak,' said Guan Zhong, 'take Xi Peng. The latter (a Daoist, is so abstract, that) his prince will not notice his presence, and no one could disagree with him. Reproaching himself without cease for not being as perfect as the Yellow Emperor was, he does not dare reproach anyone else. Sages of the first order are those who differ from the common by their transcendence; Sages of the second order are those who differ from them by their talent. If these latter try to impose on men by their talent, they alienate themselves. If, despite their talent, they place themselves beneath men, they win them all. Xi Peng is a man of this kind. Further, he and his family are little known, so none are envious of him. Since I must advise you, I repeat, take Xi Peng.\*'

G. Whilst the King of Wu was boating on the Blue River, he landed on Monkey Island. The monkeys saw him coming, and fled and hid themselves in the brushwood. One alone stayed behind, playing about as if to flout him. The king shot an arrow at it. The monkey snatched it in flight. Nettled, the king ordered all of his followers to give chase to the impertinent monkey, which soon succumbed to the number of assailants. In front of its corpse, the king gave the following lesson to Yen Bu Yi, his favourite: 'This monkey perished because it provoked me by its ostentation and know-how. Watch yourself! Do not imitate it! Do not lose my favour through your bravado.' - Scared, Yen Bu Yi asked Dong Wu

\*Cf. Lie Zi ch. 6 C.



to teach him simplicity. At the end of three years everyone spoke well of him (and he improved all the time).

H. Nan Bo Zi Qi was sitting, looking at the sky and sighing. - Yen Cheng Zi found him in this state, and said to him: 'You were in ecstasy\*.' - Zi Qi said: 'Once I lived as a hermit in the mountain caves. The Prince of Qi took me from there in order to make me his minister, and the people of Qi congratulated him. I must have been betrayed, for him to have found me thus. I must have been sold, for him to have acquired me thus. Alas! My freedom is ended. I pity those who are lost through accepting offices. I pity those who complain they have no office. I cannot run away. There is nothing left for me except to withdraw myself in ecstasy.'

I. When Confucius went to the Kingdom of Chu, the king offered him the wine of welcome. Sun Shu Ao presented the cup. Shi Nan Yi Liao made the preliminary libation, and then said: 'It is at this moment that the ancients used to make a speech.' - Confucius said: 'Today I will use the method of speech without words, in which you, my masters, have played your part so ably. You, Yi Liao, prevented a battle and made peace between Zhou and Song by juggling with spherical bells. You, Sun Shu Ao, coaxed the brigands of Qin Qiu and led them to lay down their arms by dancing a pantomime in front of them. If I should dare, in front of you, to speak other than through my silence, I ought to have my mouth stopped up with a three-foot cork (I ought to be struck dumb for life).' - In place of so much seeking, holding oneself to the unity of the Principle, keeping silent in front of the ineffable, is perfection. Those who do otherwise are ill-fated men. - What makes the greatness of the sea is that it unites in its bosom all the water-courses flowing to the east. Likewise the Sage, who embraces heaven and earth, does good to all without seeking to be known. He who has passed his life thus, without office during life, without title after death, without becoming famous; he is a great man. - A dog is not a good dog because it barks a lot. To be a great man, it is not enough to believe that one is so. To be great is the same as saying to be whole, like heaven and earth. One only becomes great through imitating the mode of being and action of heaven and earth. Holding to that without hastening, but also without letting go; not letting oneself be influenced by anything; returning into oneself without being fatigued, studying antiquity without being saddened; that is what makes a great man.

J. Zi Qi had eight sons. He lined them up in front of the physiognomist Jiu Fang Yin, and said to him: 'Please examine these boys

\*Compare with chapter 2 A.

and tell me which one shows signs of good fortune.' - The soothsayer said: 'This one, Kun.' - Surprised, and full of joy, the father asked: 'What do you predict for him?' - 'He will eat the food of a prince until the end of his days,' said the soothsayer. - With these words Zi Qi's happiness turned to sadness. He said weeping: 'What evil has my son done that he should have such a destiny?' - 'What do you mean?' said the soothsayer; 'when someone eats at a prince's table, this honour resounds as far as the third generation of his ancestry. You will therefore have your share of your son's good fortune. And you weep as if you are afraid of this good fortune? How could something fortunate for your son be ill-omened for you?' - 'Alas,' said Zi Qi, 'are you quite sure that you interpret my son's destiny correctly; that he will have wine and meat at his pleasure all his life? This is a good thing, no doubt; but what price will my son pay for it? That is what you have not seen clearly, perhaps. I distrust this presage because nothing but extraordinary things happen to me. Although I have no flock, a ewe has come to drop her lambs in my house. Although I do not hunt, a quail has made her nest there. Are these not strange happenings? I have a great fear that my son also may have a strange future. I would have wished him to live always as I do, free between heaven and earth, enjoying like me the good things of heaven and eating the fruits of the earth. I do not wish him, any more than myself, to have concerns, worries, or adventures. I wish him, like myself, to climb so high in natural simplicity that no earthly thing can impress him any more. I would have wished that, like myself, he would have become absorbed in indifference, not in interest. And here you are, predicting one of the most vulgar rewards. This implies that he will have rendered the most vulgar service. The presage is therefore ill-omened. It is probably an inevitable fatality, for, neither my son nor I have sinned, so this must be a decree of destiny. That is why I weep.' - Later, both the prediction of the soothsayer and the apprehension of the father were realised in the following way: Zi Qi sent his son Kun to the land of Yen. On the way he was seized by brigands. Seeing that it would be hard to sell him entire as a slave, they cut off one of his feet, and then sold him in the Principality of Qi where he became inspector of the refuse dump in the capital. Until the end of his life he ate his share of the Prince of Qi's left-overs, just as the soothsayer had predicted; a prey to the vilest of worries, just as his father had predicted.

**K.** Nie Que met Xu You, and asked him: 'Where are you going like that?' - 'I am deserting the service of Emperor Yao,' said the latter. - 'Why?' asked Nie Que. - 'Because he makes himself ridiculous with his affected goodness. He believes he works a marvel by attracting men. What could be more banal than that?'

Show affection to men, and they will love you, do good to them, and they run after you; flatter them, and they exalt you; then, at the least displeasure, they drop you. Certainly goodness attracts; but those attracted come for the advantage that they obtain, not for the love of one who treats them well. Goodness is a device for taking men, analogous to the snares which capture birds. One cannot, with one and the same procedure, do good to all men whose natures are so diverse. Yao believes, with his goodness, to do good to the empire, when in fact he ruins it. This is because he sees from his interior which is subject to illusion. Sages who consider from the exterior have seen rightly in this case.' - Let us note, amongst the diverse natures of men, the following three classes: the slackers, the hangers-on, and the bent-over types... The slackers learn the sentences of a master, assimilate them, repeat them, believing that they say something when in fact, simple parrots, they only recite... The hangers-on attach themselves to what makes them live, like those lice that live on pigs. The day comes when the butcher, having killed the pig, sings it. The same happens sometimes to the parasites of a patron... The bent-over type was Shun. He attracted by I know not what attraction, just as grease attracts ants by its rancid smell. The people liked Shun's odour. Each time he changed residence, the people followed him. It followed from that, that Shun never knew peace. - Ah well, the transcendent man is neither a slacker, nor a hanger-on, nor a bent-over type. He detests popularity above all. He is not familiar. He does not confide in others. Dedicated to his abstract superior principles, he is good to everyone, and the friend of no one. For him, even the ants are not simple enough. He is as simple as sheep or fish. He holds as true what he sees, hears, and thinks. When he acts spontaneously his action is as straight as a line made with a cord. When he is led by events he adapts himself to their course.

L. The True Men of old conformed to evolution, and never intervened, by an artificial effort, in the natural course of things. Living, they preferred life to death; dead, they preferred death to life. Everything in its time, just as when one takes medicine. - To struggle against the course of things is to try to bring about one's own ruin. Thus minister Wen Zhong, in saving the Kingdom of Yue which should have perished, caused his own ruin. - One should not wish to give a better eye to the owl, or shorten the crane's legs. Its natural lot is what best suits each one. - He who knows how to draw on his own share of natural resources, will draw from them always. Similarly, although the sun and wind evaporate the water of the rivers, they always flow, because the springs, their natural reserves, supply their courses. - Nothing is more constant, more faithful, than natural laws, like those which cause water to flow down slopes, or opaque bodies to cast shadows. Man should

take care not to wear out what nature has given him, through immoderate or excessive usage. Seeing wears the eyes, hearing wears the ears, thinking uses the mind, any activity uses up the agent. And to say, as some men do, that they are proud of the abuse they have committed in this way; isn't that a deadly illusion!

**M.** Man whose body occupies such a small space on earth, traverses space as far as heaven through his spirit. He knows the great unity, his first state of concentration, the prolificity of beings, universal evolution, the immensity of the world, the reality of all that it contains, the steadfastness of the laws which rule it. At the base of everything is nature. In nature's profound depths is the pivot of all (the Principle), which seems to be double (yin and yang) without really being so, and which is knowable, but inadequately. Man comes to know it through force of seeking it. Extending itself beyond the limits of the world, his spirit reaches the ungraspable reality (the Principle), which is always the same, always without default. That is his greatest success. He obtains it through reasoning, following the certainties already acquired, on to things still uncertain, which become little by little certain in their turn, knowledge of the Principle being the final supreme certitude.

Chapter 25. Truth.

**A.** When Ze Yang (Peng Zeyang) went to Chu, minister Yi Jie announced his arrival to the king, and then carried on with his business. Obtaining no audience, Ze Yang asked Wang Guo, a Sage of the land, to speak in his favour. 'Ask this service of Gong Yue Xiu,' said Wang Guo. - 'Who is he?' asked Ze Yang. - Wang Guo replied: 'He is a man who harpoons turtles in the river during winter, and rests in the woods in summer (a Daoist Sage). Yi Jie will do nothing for you. Ambitious, intriguing, egoistical, he works only for himself. Gong Yue Xiu is absolutely disinterested, and, through the elevation of his principles, imposes on the brutal king of Chu. - By his conversational charm, the Sage makes people forget their pangs of misery, and makes them resigned. Through his moral ascendancy he makes the great forget their high rank and become humble. He fraternizes with the small, and converses with the great, giving to each what he can understand, and keeping the rest for himself. Without speaking, he fills his surroundings with peace. Without preaching, he improves those around him. He does not disdain from dwelling with his family from time to time, in order to carry out his role as father, and to do good to his own. Simple, closed, peaceful, he is a stranger to all preoccupations, and imposes himself on all. Gong Yue Xiu is a man of this kind. He alone could make the King of Chu, who is badly disposed towards you, receive you.'

**B.** The Sage understands that, linked together one with the other, all beings form a body (a whole), but he does not seek to penetrate the intimate nature of this link, which is the mystery of the cosmic norm. Following the universal law in all his movements, he is the agent of heaven. Men call him a Sage, because he co-operates with heaven. He is not preoccupied with knowing what cannot be known, but acts with the knowledge that he has, in perseverance. He does not reflect on the qualities he may have, but leaves the job of ascertaining them to others, not attributing the gift of nature to himself. He is benevolent towards men, not from affection, but by instinct, and he does not need their recognition.

**C.** When, after a long absence, a man returns to his country, he experiences a feeling of satisfaction, which neither the sight of tombs, nor the disappearance of nine-tenths of his acquaintances, can alter. Because he sees again in spirit what once was, abstracting from what is, elevating himself above the present circumstances. - Likewise the Sage, impassive amongst the vicissitudes of the world, contemplates in them its unchanging nature. - Likewise the legendary sovereign Ren Xiang remained indifferent in the centre of the turning circle of the things of this world, letting the

eternal and undivided evolution evolve, he alone remaining non-transformed in the universal transformation (because of his indifference). This position is unique. - One should not try to imitate heaven by positive acts (as Confucius does). One should imitate heaven by letting all things go. This is how the Sage serves humanity. He abstracts from everything, and lives with the times, with neither default nor excess. This is passive union with the Principle, the only one possible. To seek active union is to attempt the impossible. \*Emperor Tang's minister considered his post as honorary. He let all things go, and kept strictly to applying the laws, which made the success of his government. Now, on the contrary, Confucius wishes one to go to the bottom of everything, and numerous rules to be made. He forgets the words of Yong Cheng (an ancient Daoist) which are so true: 'To add the days into years and suppose a substance behind the accidents is an error coming from a false conception of the nature of time and beings. Reality is an eternal present, an essential unity.' (The commentary adds: There is not even a you and an I).

D. The King of Wei concluded a treaty with the King of Qi, who violated it, and the furious King of Wei resolved to have him killed by a hired assassin (which was the usual practice at that time). - Gongsun Yen, his minister for war, said: 'You have ten thousand war chariots, are you going to leave your vengeance to a hired ruffian? Rather give me two hundred thousand men. I will ravage the land of Qi, besiege its king in his capital, and kill him in his defeat. It will be noble and complete.' - Minister Ji Zi found this advice bad, and said to the king: 'Do not provoke Qi. We have just built such a fine rampart. If it were damaged, it would upset the citizens who worked on it. Peace is the solid base of power. The minister for war is a beastly muddler who should not be listened to.' Minister Hua Zi (a Daoist) found each advice equally bad, and said to the king: 'He who wanted war, to show you his military talent, is a muddler. He who advised peace, to show off his eloquence, is also a muddler. The advice given by each is equally worthless.' - 'Then, what should I do?' asked the king. - 'Meditate on the Principle,' said Hua Zi, 'and draw your own conclusions\*\*.' - The king did not reach a conclusion, so Hua Zi brought a sophist friend, Dai Jinren, to him. The sophist began with the following allegory: 'Take a slug. This slug has two horns. Its left horn is the Kingdom of the Brutal King; its right horn that of the Savage King. These two kingdoms are ceaselessly at war. The dead, without number, litter the ground. Fifteen days after his defeat, the vanquished is already seeking his revenge.' - 'Twaddle,' said the

\*Here the text is probably mutilated.

\*\*Neither war nor peace, but let things go.

King of Wei. - 'I beg your pardon,' said Dai Jinren. 'O king, do you consider space as limited in one of its six dimensions?' - 'No,' said the king. 'Space is unlimited in its six dimensions.' - 'Therefore,' said Dai Jinren, 'immense space has no limits; do the two little Principalities of Wei and Qi have frontiers?' - 'No,' said the king who was not strong in dialectic and judged that he could not concede to the lesser what he had refused to the greater. - 'No frontiers, therefore no dispute,' said Dai Jinren. 'Now tell me in what way you differ from the Savage King of the right horn?' - 'I do not see it,' said the king. Dai Jinren went out leaving the king quite bewildered. When Hua Zi came in, the king said to him: 'He is a superior man, only a Sage could answer him.' - 'Ah yes,' said Hua Zi. 'When one blows on a clarinet, a loud noise comes out; when one blows into a sword-guard (hollow, of conical form), only a murmur comes out. If Dai Jinren was estimated at his worth, the praises that are given to Yao and Shun would be reduced to a murmur, the praise of Dai Jinren resounding like a clarinet.' (The affairs of Wei and Qi are left there).

E. Confucius was travelling to Chu when he took lodging at Yi Qiu, in a spice-maker's house. Soon after, the neighbours climbed on to the flat roof (to look into the courtyard of the house where Confucius was staying). 'Why do those people look scared?' asked the disciple Zi Lu who accompanied Confucius. 'They,' said Confucius 'are the family of a Sage who voluntarily hides himself amongst the people and lives in obscurity. The moral elevation of this man is sublime. He conceals it carefully, moreover, only speaking of banal things, without giving away the secret of his heart. His views differ from those of the people of these times, and he scarcely has any contact with men. He is buried alive here, like Yi Liao.' - 'May I go to invite him to come and see us?' asked Zi Lu. - 'It would be a waste of time,' said Confucius. 'He has just climbed on the roof in order to assure himself that it is really I who pass by. Seeing that I am involved in politics, he must have very little desire to converse with me. Knowing that I am going to visit the King of Chu, he must fear that I will give away his hide-out, and that the king will force him to accept a post. I wager that he is going to put himself in a safe place.' - Zi Lu went to see, and found the house deserted.

F. The farm bailiff of Zhang Wu said to Zi Lao, a disciple of Confucius: 'If you are ever placed in office, be neither superficial nor meticulous. Once, in cultivating these two strips of land, I put in insufficient labour at the beginning, followed by excessive weeding, which resulted in most unsatisfactory crops. Now I work harder at the beginning, and then weed moderately; this gives me good crops.' - Zhuang Zi heard this and said: 'Nowadays, in

the cultivation of their minds and bodies. Many people fall into the faults indicated by this bailiff. Either they do not work enough on the ground of their nature, and let it become invaded by passions; or they weed it without discernment, tearing up what should be kept and destroying their natural qualities. - If one does not take care, vices invade a healthy nature just as ulcers invade a healthy body through the effect of excessive internal heat which comes to light on the outside.'

**G.** Bo Ju who studied under Lao Dan, said to him one day: 'Give me leave of absence to make a tour of the empire.' - 'What good will that do?' said Lao Dan. 'Everywhere in the empire is the same as it is here.' - Bo Ju insisted, and Lao Dan asked him: 'In which Principality will you begin your tour?' - 'In Qi,' said Bo Ju. 'When I get there, I will go straight to the corpse of one of those who have been punished, that the King of Qi leaves lying without burial; I will redress him; I will cover him with my robe; I will cry justice to heaven in his name. I will say to him crying: Brother! Brother! Did you have to be the victim of the inconsistencies of those who hold the empire in their hands? The government in power forbids stealing and killing under pain of death. And these same men push theft and murder, by honouring nobility and wealth, which are the allurements of crime. So long as distinctions of ownership remain, will one ever see an end to the conflicts between men? - Once the princes were grateful to their subjects for the order that existed, and they imputed any disorder to themselves. When a man perished, they reproached themselves with his loss. Nowadays things go quite differently. Laws and ordinances are traps from which no one can escape. The death penalty is for those who cannot accomplish quite impossible tasks. Thus reduced to their wit's end, the people lose their natural honesty, and commit crimes. To whom should these crimes be imputed? To the unfortunate ones who atone for them; or to the princes who have provoked them?'

**H.** In sixty years of life, Qu Bo Yu changed his opinions sixty times. Fifty-nine times he firmly believed he possessed the truth, fifty-nine times he suddenly recognised that he was in error. And who knows if the sixtieth opinion, with which he died, was better founded than the fifty-nine preceding ones? The same thing happens to any man who attaches himself to beings in detail, who seeks anything other than the confused knowledge of the Principle. Beings become, this is a fact; but the root of this becoming is invisible. From their false science of detail, the common people draw erroneous conclusions; whereas, if they were to start from their ignorance, they would come to the true science, that of the Principle, of the absolute, the origin of all. - Few escape the great



error, alas!.. Then, when men say yes, is it really yes; when they say no, is it really no? What is the value, the truth, of human assertions?.. The absolute alone is true, because it alone is.

I. Confucius put first of all to the great historiographer Da Tao, then to Bo Changqian, then to Xi Wei, this same question: 'Duke Ling of Wei was a drunkard and a debauchee; he governed badly and his word could not be trusted. He would have merited a posthumous epithet worse than that of Ling. Why was he called Ling?' - 'Because the people who liked him well enough, wanted it thus,' replied Da Tao. - 'Because the critics accorded him attenuating circumstances,' said Bo Changqian, 'because of the following fact: One day when he was bathing with three of his wives in the same swimming pool, minister Shi Qiu had to enter on urgent business, so the duke covered himself and had his women covered. They concluded from that, that this wanton still had some modesty left in him, and they contented themselves to call him Ling.' - 'An error,' said Xi Wei. 'Here are the facts: After the duke's death, they consulted the tortoise on the place where he should be buried. The reply was: Not in his family cemetery, but at Sha Qiu. When they dug his grave at the place indicated, they found an ancient tomb at the bottom. The stone slab which closed it was brought up and washed, and they read on it the inscription: Neither you nor your posterity will rest here, for Duke Ling will take your place. The epithet Ling was therefore awarded him by destiny, and that is why they gave it to him'..... The conclusion is that historical truth also is not concrete except when derived from the Principle.

J. Shao Zhi asked Tai Gong Diao: 'What are the maxims of the hamlets?' - 'Hamlets,' said Tai Gong Diao, 'are the smallest human agglomerations, of a dozen families, of only a hundred individuals, forming a body which has its traditions. These traditions have not all been invented in one go, deductively. They have been built up, by distinguished members of the community, by the addition of individual experience; just as a mountain is made from handfuls of earth, a river from numerous trickles of water. The verbal expression of these traditions is what one calls the maxims of the hamlets. They form a law. All goes well in the empire on condition that one gives them their free course, just as the Principle, indifferent, impartial, lets all things follow their course without influencing them. - The Principle does not claim any title (Lord, Governor). It does not act. Doing nothing, there is nothing it cannot do (not by intervening actively, but as the evolutive norm contained in everything). In appearance, to our human manner of seeing, times succeed each other, the universe is changing, adversity and prosperity alternate. In reality, these variations, effects of a unique norm, do not modify the immutable whole. All the contrasts find a place

in this whole without disturbance; just as all kinds of plants grow together in a swamp, or trees and rocks are mixed together on a mountain. - But let us come back to the maxims of the hamlets. They are the expression of experience which results from the observation of natural phenomena.' - 'Then,' said Shao Zhi, 'why not say that these maxims are the expression of the Principle?' - 'Because,' said Tai Gong Diao, 'they are restricted to the field of human affairs, whereas the Principle is infinite. They do not even extend to the affairs of other earthly beings, whose sum is to humanity as ten thousand is to one. Beyond earthly beings is the visible immensity of heaven and earth. Above all, is the Principle, common to all, containing and penetrating everything, whose proper attribute and sole designation is infinity, for it has no name of its own.' - 'Then,' said Shao Zhi, 'explain how all that is, comes from this infinity.' - Tai Gong Diao said: 'Emanated from the Principle, the yin and the yang influence each other, destroy each other, and reproduce themselves reciprocally. From this comes the physical world, with the succession of seasons, which are produced and destroyed by one another. From this comes the moral world, with its attractions and repulsions, loves and hates. Thence the distinction of the sexes, and their union for procreation. Then certain correlative and successive states, such as prosperity and adversity, security and danger. Then abstract ideas of mutual influence, of reciprocal causality, of a certain circular evolution in which beginnings follow endings. That is more or less what, drawn from observation and expressed in words, constitutes the sum of human knowledge. Those who know the Principle do not scrutinize further, they do not speculate either on the nature of the primordial emanation or the eventual end of the order of existing things.' - Shao Zhi continued his questioning: 'Daoist authors have, however, discussed these questions. Thus Ji Zhen holds to a passive and unconscious emanation, Jie Zi to an active and conscious production. Which one is right?' - 'Tell me,' said Tai Gong Diao, 'why do cocks go cock-a-doodle-doo, why do dogs go bow-wow? The fact of this difference is known to all men, but the wisest of men will never tell you why. It is the same with nature; that is all we know of it. Attenuate an object until it becomes invisible, amplify it until it becomes incomprehensible, you will not extract its reason for being from it. And how much less will you ever bring to light the question of the genesis of the universe, the most abstruse question of all? "It is the work of an author," said Jie Zi. "It became out of nothing," said Ji Zhen. Neither of these two will ever prove their words. Both of them are in error. It is impossible that the universe had a pre-existing author. It is impossible for being to have come from nothingness. Man can know nothing about his own life, because the law that rules life and death, his own transformations, escapes him; what can he know therefore of the

law ruling the great cosmic transformations, universal evolution? To say of the universe "someone has made it" or "it came out of nothing," these are not demonstrable propositions, but gratuitous suppositions. For me, when I look back towards the origin, I see it losing itself in a far distant infinite; when I look in front towards the future, I do not catch a glimpse of any end. Now human words are not able to express what is infinite, that which has no end. Limited like the beings that use them, they can only express the affairs of the limited world of these beings, limited and changing things. They cannot be applied to the Principle, which is infinite, immutable, and eternal... Now, after the emanation, the Principle from which beings emanate, being itself inherent in these beings, cannot properly be called the author of these beings; this refutes Jie Zi. As the Principle inherent in all beings existed before beings, one cannot strictly say that these beings have come out of nothing; this refutes Ji Zhen. When one now says the Principle, this term no longer designates the solitary being, such as it was in primordial times; it designates the being that exists in all beings, the universal norm which presides over cosmic evolution. The nature of the Principle, the nature of Being, is incomprehensible and ineffable. Only the limited can be understood and expressed. The Principle acts as the pole, as the axis, for the universality of beings, and we say of it only that it is the pole, the axis of universal evolution, without attempting either to understand it or explain it.'

## Chapter 26. Fate.

**A.** Accidents coming from without can neither be foreseen nor avoided, no more by the good than the bad. Thus Guan Longfeng and Bi Gan were executed, Ji Zi only saved his life by pretending to be a madman, and E Lai lost his life just like the tyrants Jie and Zhou. The most perfect loyalty did not prevent the ruin of ministers such as Wu Yuan and Chang Hong. The most exemplary filial piety did not prevent Xiao Yi and Zeng Shen from being ill-treated. - Ruin comes from the most harmless situations, from situations which appear the most sure, just as fire is born of two pieces of wood rubbed together, as thunder comes from ruptures in the equilibrium of the yin and the yang, as lightning flashes from a thundercloud. - The worst cases are those where a man is held between two fatalities, with no possible escape; where he writhes without knowing how to resolve his situation; where his mind, as though suspended between heaven and earth, does not know what to decide; consolation and affliction alternate, for and against conflict with each other, an interior fire devours him. The fire consumes his peace with an ardour such that no water can extinguish, so effectively that his life is in danger of running its course prematurely.

**B.** Zhuang Zi knew these great extremities. One day destitution reduced him to asking the Bailiff of the Yellow River for a little grain. - 'Very well,' said the latter to him; 'after the taxes have been collected, I will lend you three hundred taels (Chinese ounces), will that be all right for you?' - Nettled, Zhuang Zi said: 'Yesterday, when I was on my way here, I heard a call for help. It was a gudgeon lying in a little water in the bottom of a rut which was about to dry up. "What do you want?" I asked it. - "I need a little water," it replied, "so that I may continue to live." - "Very well," I said, "I am walking to the Kingdoms of Wu and Yue. On the way back I will bring you some water from the Western River. Will that be all right?" - "Alas," groaned the gudgeon, "in order to live I only need a little bit of water, but I need it right now. If you cannot do that for me, you had better pick me up and give me to a dried fish merchant; then I will not have to suffer so long.'

**C.** *When fate weighs heavy on him, the Sage must not give up. If he stands fast, fortune may turn in his favour.* Ren Gongzi, furnished with a good hook, a strong line, and fifty mussels as bait, squatted on the beach at Hui Ji and set himself to fishing in the eastern sea. He fished like that every day for a whole year without catching a thing. At last, suddenly, an enormous fish swallowed his bait. Properly hooked, it tried in vain to dive into the depths. It was brought back to the surface where it beat the

water with its fins, making it foam, and made a devilish noise that could be heard from afar. Finally it was cut up and all the people of the land ate it, and this story was told, sung, and admired in the following ages. Let us now suppose that, tired of his long wait by the seaside, Ren Gongzi had gone off to fish gudgeon in the swamps; he would never have taken this fine prize, nor acquired his reputation. So much for those who, deserting the ideal, lower themselves to flatter small-minded masters.

**D. *Some are the victims of fate even after their death.*** Some young scholars were in the act of violating a tomb, in order to assure themselves that the ancients really did for their dead all that is said in the Odes and the Rites. Their master, who was mounting guard outside, cried out to them: 'Hurry up! The eastern sky is beginning to lighten! How far have you got with it?' - From the interior the young people replied: 'We still have to inspect his vestments. But we have already ascertained that the corpse really has, in its mouth, the pearl of which the Odes speak in the text "it is green, the corn on the hills; this man who has done no good during his life, why after death has he a pearl in his mouth?"'... Next, having pulled apart the corpse's lips by pulling on his beard and moustache, they forced open his jaws with the point of an iron hammer; with care, not for his sake, but in order not to damage the pearl, which they took.

**E. *Criticising, judging, draws misfortune to oneself.*** The disciple of Lao Lai Zi went out to collect firewood, and met Confucius. When he got back, he said to his master: 'I have seen a scholar, with a long trunk and short legs, round shouldered, his ears set well back, looking as though he were in pain for the whole universe; I do not know which school he belongs to.' - 'It's Qiu,' said Lao Lai Zi, 'ask him to come in.' - When Confucius had come in, Lao Lai Zi said to him: 'Qiu, give up your obstinacy and your own ideas; think and act like other scholars.' - Confucius bowed, on order to thank him for the advice given, as was required by the rites; then, when the ritual smile was effaced, he appeared sad, and asked: 'Do you think that my projects of reform will not materialize?' - 'They will certainly not materialize,' said Lao Lai Zi. 'As you are incapable of taking the criticisms of your contemporaries, why do you provoke those of all posterity? Do you deliberately try to make yourself unhappy; are you aware of what you are doing? Soliciting the favour of the great, courting the affection of young people, as you do, is quite a vulgar way of acting. Your judgements and criticisms will make numerous enemies for you. True Sages are much more reserved than you are, and they get somewhere thanks to this reserve. Unhappy you, who have given yourself the mission of provoking everyone, persevering on this path with obstinacy.'

**F.** *There are those who have premonitions of the fatality which menaces others, but who are unable to perceive what menaces themselves.* One night, in a dream, Prince Yuan of Song saw a weeping human figure at the door of his bedchamber, and it said to him: 'I come from the Zai Lu chasm. The Genie of Ceng Jiang deputized me to the one of the Yellow River. On my way there I was taken by Yu Ju the fisherman.' - On awaking, Prince Yuan ordered his seers to interpret his dream. They replied: 'The being you saw is a transcendent turtle.' - The prince asked: 'Is there, amongst the fishermen here, one called Yu Ju?' - 'Yes,' said his assistants. - 'See that he appears before me,' said the prince. - The next day, at the official audience, the fisherman presented himself. - 'What have you caught?' the prince asked him. - 'I found a white turtle in my net, whose carapace measures five feet in circumference,' said the fisherman. - 'Present it to me,' ordered the prince. - When it had been brought, the prince asked himself if he should have it killed or if he should save its life. He asked the fates for the solution to his doubt. The reply was: 'To kill the turtle will be advantageous for divination.' The turtle was therefore killed. Its carapace was perforated in seventy-two places. Not one of these divinations gave a false answer. - Confucius heard about this and said: 'Thus this transcendent turtle could appear afterwards to Prince Yuan, but could not foresee and avoid its own capture! After its death its carapace continued to make infallible predictions for others, but it had been unable to predict its own death. It is clear that science has its limits, that transcendence itself does not reach to everything. - Yes, the most informed man, if he has made many enemies, ends up by becoming their victim. The fish which escapes the cormorants, is taken in a net. What is the use therefore of giving oneself so many sterile occupations, instead of limiting oneself to considering things from above? What is the good of contriving and discussing, instead of holding oneself to natural prudence? The new-born child does not learn to speak artificially through the lessons of a master; he learns it naturally through his commerce with his parents who speak. Likewise natural prudence is acquired through common experience without effort. As for extraordinary accidents, what is the good of trying to foresee them, since that does not save oneself? This is fate!'

*(The following fragments, till the end of the chapter, are out of place, says the commentary; rightly).*

**G.** The sophist Hui Zi said to Zhuang Zi: 'You only speak of useless things.' - Getting his own back, Zhuang Zi replied: If you know what is useless, you must also know, I think, what is useful. The earth is useful to man, since it supports his feet, isn't it?' -

'Yes,' said Hui Zi. - 'Let us suppose that a chasm opens up in front of his feet; will it still be useful to him?' asked Zhuang Zi. - 'No,' said Hui Zi. - 'Then,' said Zhuang Zi, 'it is demonstrated that useless and useful are synonyms, since you have just called the same earth useful and useless. Therefore I only speak of useful things.'

H. Zhuang Zi said: 'The natural dispositions of men are diverse. One cannot make a gregarious man live in solitude; one cannot make a solitary man converse. But absolute solitude, immoderate conversation, are unnatural excesses. The misanthrope buries himself alive, the intriguer throws himself into the fire. One should avoid these extremes. - One should not, moreover, perform extraordinary acts, for, once the circumstances under which they were performed are forgotten, history will perhaps judge them eccentric rather than heroic. - One should not always exalt antiquity and deprecate the present times, as the men of the books (the Confucians) do. Since Xi Wei, we know that no one has been able to climb back against the current. Therefore let us follow the thread of the times. - The superior man accommodates himself to the times and circumstances. He is not an eccentric, nor a misanthrope, nor an intriguer. He lends himself to men without giving himself. He lets them think and say, without contradicting them, and keeps his opinions to himself.'

I. On condition that there is no obstacle, the eye sees, the ear hears, the nose smells, the mouth tastes, the heart perceives, and the mind produces the appropriate actions. On any way, the essential is that there is no obstruction. Any obstruction produces strangulation, arrest of functions, injury to life. - For their vital acts, beings depend on breathing. If breath is not abundant in a man, the fault lies not with heaven, which penetrates him day and night; it lies with himself, through obstructing his passages by physical or moral obstacles. - For conception, the space within the womb must be fully permeable to the heavenly influx, which implies the permeability of its two avenues (the Fallopian tubes). For the maintenance of life, the space within the heart must be fully permeable to the influence of heaven, which implies the permeability of its six valves. When a house is encumbered, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, lacking space, dispute. When the apertures of the heart are obstructed, its functioning becomes irregular. - The mind is seduced by beauty. Valour degenerates in ambition, ambition in brutality, prudence in obstinacy, science in disputes, plenitude in glut. The public good has produced the administration and officialdom. - In springtime, under the combined action of sun and rain, the plants and trees grow luxuriantly. The hoe and billhook remove half of them, the rest remain. Neither

those weeded out nor those left know the reason for their lot. Fate!

**J.** Rest recovers health, continence repairs body wear, peace remedies enervation. These are curative remedies. Preventatives would be of greater value. - The procedures are different. The transcendent man has his own. The ordinary Sage has his own. Able people have theirs. Governors and administrators have their principles.

**K.** A same procedure does not always produce the same result. At the capital of Song, the father of Yen Men the gatekeeper, died, and his son lost weight so much from mourning, that they thought it right to give the post of Master of Officials to this paragon of filial piety. Seeing this, others did the same, but did not obtain a post and died of consumption. - In order to avoid the throne, Xu You thought flight was enough, whereas Wu Guang believed he had to commit suicide. Deceived in their ambition, Ji Tuo exiled himself, and Shen Tu Di drowned himself.

**L.** When the fish is taken, one forgets the net. When the hare is captured, the snare is no longer of interest. When an idea is transmitted, it matters little which words have served to convey it. How much would I (Zhuang Zi) prefer relationships only with men for whom the ideas would be all, the words nothing\*.

\*This paragraph is the dislocated beginning of the next chapter.



Chapter 27. Speech and Words.

A. 'Of my words,' said Zhuang Zi\*, 'many are allegories, many are stories of the discourses of others. I have said, from time to time, what I think right, according to my natural sense. - I have used allegories taken from everyday things, in order to make abstract things understandable. I will not say that they are all perfect; a father should not praise his child. Praise is only worth something when it comes from a third party. However I believe them apt to convince. So much the worse for those they do not convince. - I have reported the discourses of others, in order to bring to light certain controversies; those who discuss them being inclined to attach great importance to the thesis of their party. The men whom I have just cited are the ancients who have gone before me. Not that I consider all ancients as authorities. It is clearly far from that. He who has not got to the bottom of things, no matter how ancient he is, is not an authority from my point of view, and he should not, in my opinion, have any influence. He who gives accounts of ancient things (Confucius), is not by that a master in ancient things. - I have spoken without art, naturally, according to the impulse of my inner sense; for only this kind of speech pleases and lasts. In effect, preliminary to all discourses, there pre-exists an innate harmony in all beings, their nature. From the fact of this pre-existing harmony, my speech, if it is natural, will make the others vibrate, with few or no words. From that the well-known sayings: "it is spoken without words"..."there is sometimes no need of words"..."some have spoken all their life without saying anything"..."some, who kept their mouth shut all their life, said a lot!" - To the same natural sense is attached the fact of experience, that all men perceive spontaneously if a thing is fitting or not, if it is thus or not thus. It is fitting because it is fitting; it does not suit because it does not suit. Every man is gifted with this natural sense of right and wrong. It vibrates in unison in all men. Words that conform to it are accepted because they sound right, and they last because they are natural. - And where does this unity of natural sense come from? It comes from the unity of all natures. Under specific distinctions and multiple individuals, beneath innumerable and incessant transformations, as the basis of cyclic evolution, without beginning or end, is hidden a law, which has been called the natural (potter's) wheel, or simply nature (one, participated in by all beings, in which this common participation produces a base of common harmony).'

B. Zhuang Zi said to Hui Zi: 'In his sixtieth year, Confucius was converted. He denied what he had affirmed up till then (artificial

\*Some critics see this paragraph as the displaced preface to Zhuang Zi's work.

goodness and fairness). But did he believe what he then came to affirm more strongly than what he had previously affirmed?' - 'I think,' said Hui Zi, 'that Confucius always acted according to his convictions.' - 'I doubt it,' said Zhuang Zi. 'But, whatever the truth of this, after his conversion he taught that everything came to man from the great source; that his singing must conform to the scales and his conduct to the law; that in case of speculative or practical moral doubt one must decide according to what people say of it; that one must submit oneself completely to the customs established by the state, whatever they may be, etcetera... Enough! Enough! I cannot follow him that far. - To fare well, man must follow his natural instinct.'

C. Zeng Zi was twice an official, under different states of mind which he explained thus: 'During my first office I was paid only thirty-odd bushels of grain; but as my parents were still alive and able to benefit, I fulfilled this office with pleasure. During my second office, I was paid a hundred and ninety-two thousand bushels; but as my parents were dead and unable to enjoy it, I fulfilled this office without pleasure.' - His disciples asked Confucius: 'Is there not some vicious attachment of his heart in Zeng Zi's behaviour?' - 'Without doubt,' said Confucius; 'attachment to his pay, which he should not have regarded more than he would a mosquito or a crane passing before his eyes.' In reality, it was an attachment to his parents. Confucius did not wish to say this, because filial piety was the basis of his system. Zhuang Zi puts him in a bad light, and insinuates that even attachment to one's parents is against pure nature, since it causes either pleasure or sadness.

D. Yen Cheng Zi You said to Dong Guo Zi Qi: 'Since I have been your disciple, I have passed through the following stages: After a year I rediscovered my native simplicity. After three years I lost the sense of "you" and "I". After four years, I was indifferent and unfeeling. After five years, I began to live a superior life. After six years, my mind, entirely concentrated in my body, no longer wandered. After seven years, I entered in communion with universal nature. After eight years, I ceased to preoccupy myself with life and death. Finally, after nine years, the mystery was accomplished, I found myself united with the Principle.' - It is the activity during life which causes death. It is the principle yang (nature), which causes life. Therefore life and death are common things. Is there sufficient reason for being so preoccupied with them?' - They calculate celestial phenomena and measure the earth's surface; these are superficial sciences which do not reach as far as the profound reason of the universe. Knowing nothing of the beginning nor the end, can we know if the world is ruled, or not

by a law, which would assume the existence of an author? What they sometimes call interventions, could they be only a game of chance; how can we know if there are subtle beings? The judgement is that we cannot know anything of a cause outside ourselves; life is an affair of evolution; death is a fact of wear and tear.

E. Twilight (symbolising the half-wise) said to Shadow (Daoist ignorance): 'You are up and down, brought together and then scattered, seated then standing, moving and then resting; what is the reason for all this?' - 'I don't know,' said Shadow. 'I am like that, without knowing why. I am like the cicada's, or the snake's, cast off skin, an accessory, a thing having no existence of its own. I am even less real than that. With the light of day, or the fire, I appear; I disappear when the light fades. I depend for my being, on an object, which depends on the universal being, for its being. When it appears, I appear also; when it disappears, I disappear also; when it dies, I die also with it. I cannot give you an explanation of my movements.' - Thus everything is passive, existing through the Principle, depending on the Principle. Knowing this, the disciple of wisdom should above all be profoundly humble\*.

F. Yang Ziju was going to Pei and Lao Zi to Qin when they met each other at Liang. Shocked by Yang Ziju's vain attitude, Lao Zi raised his eyes to heaven, and said, sighing: 'I don't think there is any point in my wasting my time teaching you.' - Yang Ziju did not reply. - When they arrived at the staging inn, Yang Ziju first of all brought Lao Zi his toilet requisites. Next, having taken off his shoes outside the door, he approached Lao Zi on his knees, and said to him: 'For a long time I have greatly desired to receive your teaching. I did not dare to stop you on the road in order to ask you; but now that you have some leisure, will you kindly explain first to me the meaning of what you said when you sighted me?' - Lao Zi said: 'You have a high and mighty look, enough to make men run away; whereas the disciple of wisdom is as though confused, no matter how irreproachable he is, and he senses his insufficiency, no matter how advanced he is.' - Moved, Yang Ziju said: 'I will benefit from your lesson.' - He benefited so much, and became so humble during the space of the one night that he spent at the inn, that all the inn staff who had served him with fear and reverence on his arrival, paid no more attention to him before his departure (attention and respect being proportional to the insolence of the traveller in China)\*\*.

\*Compare with Zhuang Zi chapter 21.

\*\*Compare with Lie Zi chapter 2 N.

## Chapter 28. Independence\*.

A. Yao tried to cede his throne to Xu You, but the latter refused. Then Yao offered it to Zhou Zi Fu, who refused it also, not because he believed himself incapable, but because he suffered from an illness which would have been aggravated by the worry of government. He preferred the care of his own life to that of the empire. How much more would he have preferred the care of his life to less important tasks? - In his turn Shun offered the throne to Zi Zhou Zhi Bo. The latter refused under pretext of a melancholy, which would have been aggravated by the worry. It is quite certain that he would not have risked harming his life for a lesser thing. See how the disciples of the Principle differ from the common, (looking after their life, which the common people wear out through ambition). - Then Shun offered the empire to Shen Quan who refused it in these terms: 'Living in the universe and subject to its revolutions, I wear skins in winter and muslin in summer; I cultivate in the spring without tiring myself too much, and in autumn I harvest what I need; I act during the day and rest at night. I live thus, without attachment, between heaven and earth, happy and content. Why should I encumber myself with the empire? It is because you do not understand me, that you have offered it to me'... That said, to cut short any new entreaties, he left and retired into the depths of the mountains. No one knew where he settled. - Then Shun offered the empire to his old friend Hu the farmer, who refused it in these terms: 'If you who are strong and able cannot succeed in handling it, how much less I, who am not as worthy as you'... That said, in order to avoid constraint, he embarked on the sea with his wife and children, and never reappeared. - Tai Wang Dan Fu, the ancestor of the Zhous, was established at Bin, and was constantly attacked by the nomadic Di. Whatever tribute he paid them, skins and silks, dogs and horses, pearls and jade, they were never satisfied, for they coveted his territory. Dan Fu said to himself: 'My subjects are my brothers, my children; I do not wish to be the cause of their loss.' He therefore called his people together and said to them: 'Submit yourselves to the Di, and they will treat you well. Why do you cling to me? I no longer wish to live at your expense, with your lives at risk'... That said, he took his stick and left. All his people followed, and established themselves with him at the foot of Mount Qi\*\*. This is a good example of the respect the Sage has for the lives of others. - He who understands what respect one should have for life, does not risk his own, neither for love of wealth nor from fear of poverty. He does not risk it in order to advance himself. He remains in his condition, in his lot, whereas

\*There are doubts about the authenticity of this chapter.

\*\*In 1325 B.C.

the common people expose themselves lightly for an insignificant profit. - Three times in succession the people of Yue assassinated their king. In order to avoid the same fate, Prince Sou fled and hid in the Dan Xue cave. Finding themselves without a king, the people of Yue set out to find him, discovered his hide-out and smoked him out of the cave. Whilst they were lifting him into the royal carriage, the prince cried out to heaven... 'If these people needed a prince, why did it have to be me?' - It was not the rank of king that Prince Sou feared, but the misfortunes to which it exposed him. The throne of the principality was not, in his eyes, worth risking his life for. That being so, the people of Yue were right to stick to having him as their king.

**B.** The two Principalities of Han and Wei were quarrelling over a plot of common land. Zi Hua Zi went to visit Marquis Zhao Xi of Han, found him highly preoccupied with this affair, and said to him: 'Let us suppose that there existed an inexorable law conceived as follows... Whoever lays his hand on the empire will obtain the empire but lose his left or right hand, according to which one he used... In such a case, would you put your hand on the empire?' - 'Not likely,' said the marquis. - 'Perfect,' said Zi Hua Zi. 'Thus you prefer your two hands to the empire. Now your life is worth much more than your two hands, Han is worth less than the empire, and the plot of common land which is the cause of the dispute is worth still less than Han. Then why do you make yourself ill with gloom, even so far as to endanger your life, for such an insignificant object?' - 'No one has ever spoken to me with such wisdom as you have,' said the marquis. - In effect, Zi Hua Zi had clearly distinguished the futile (territorial expansion) from the important (conservation of life).

**C.** The Prince of Lu heard tell that Yen He possessed the science of the Principle, and sent a messenger to take a present of fine silks to him. Dressed in a coarse cloth, Yen He was feeding his cow at the door of his little house. The king's messenger, who did not know him, said to him: 'Is this where Yen He dwells?' - 'Yes,' said the latter, 'it is I.' - Whilst the messenger was showing him the silks, Yen He said: 'This is not possible, my friend, you must have misunderstood your instructions; go back and check them, so that you may avoid the risk of any muddle.' - The messenger went back to the town and checked his instructions. When he got back, Yen He could not be found. - This is an example of true contempt of wealth. For the disciple of the Principle, the essential is the conservation of his life. When he is constrained to govern a principality or the empire, he applies only the surplus of his vital energy, and considers his charge as an accessory thing, his principal affair remaining the care of his life. On the contrary, the common

men of these times compromise their lives for their interest; this is lamentable! - Before doing anything whatsoever, a true Sage examines the goal and chooses the means. Our moderns, on the contrary, are so thoughtless that, using the Marquis of Sui's pearl as a projectile, they shoot at a sparrow from a distance of a thousand yards, making themselves the laughing-stock of all, because they expose an object so precious for so small and uncertain a result. In reality, they do worse still, for their lives which they risk are more precious than was the Marquis of Sui's pearl\*.

D. Lie Zi was reduced to extreme poverty, and the signs of starvation could be plainly seen on his face. A visitor spoke of him to Zi Yang, the minister of the Principality of Zheng, in these terms: 'Lie Yukou is a scholar versed in the science of the Principle. His poverty will cause it to be said that the Prince of Zheng does not look after his scholars.' - Piqued by this observation, Zi Yang immediately ordered the district official to send Lie Zi some grain. When the official's envoy presented himself at his house, Lie Zi greeted him most civilly, but refused the gift. After his departure, Lie Zi's wife, striking her breasts with sadness, said: 'A Sage's wife and children should live in comfort and happiness. Until now we suffered hunger because the prince had forgotten us. Now it happens that he has remembered us and sent us food, which you have refused. Have you not acted against destiny?' - 'No,' said Lie Zi laughing, 'I have not acted against destiny, for it was not the prince who sent us the grain. Someone spoke favourably of me to the minister, who sent us this grain. If the same person had spoken unfavourably, he would have sent his hired killers, just as stupidly. It was chance, not destiny; that is why I refused. I want to owe nothing to Zi Yang.' - A short while later, Zi Yang was killed by the people in an uprising\*\*.

E. King Zhao of Chu had been driven out of his kingdom, and Yue, the court butcher, accompanied him in his flight. When the king recovered his kingdom, he distributed rewards to those who had followed him. When the butcher's turn came, he refused all recompense. 'With the king's departure, I lost my job,' he said; 'I have recovered it with his return; therefore I am recompensed. Why give me yet another reward?' - The king ordered his officials to insist, and the butcher said: 'Not having merited death through any fault (of my own), I did not wish to be killed by the rebels, that is why I followed the king; I saved my own life, and did nothing useful for the king; what right have I to accept a reward?' - Then the king ordered the butcher to be brought into his presence, thinking he could persuade him to accept. Having learnt this, the butcher said:

\*Legend: The Marquis cured a wounded serpent, which gave him a priceless pearl.

\*\*Cf. Lie Zi ch. 8 D.

'According to the law of Chu, only great rewards, given for extraordinary merit, are conferred by the king in person. Myself, as for my wisdom, it did not prevent the loss of the kingdom, and as for bravery, I fled to save my life. To tell the truth, I have not even the merit of having followed the king in his misfortune. And yet the king wishes, against the law and customs, to receive me in audience and to reward me himself. No, I do not want that to be said of him or me.' - These words were reported to the king, who said to his commander-in-chief Zi Qi: 'In his humble condition, this butcher has sublime sentiments. Offer him on my behalf a place in the hierarchy of great vassals.' - Zi Qi made him this offer, and Yue replied: 'I know that a vassal is more noble than a butcher, and that the revenue of a fief is more than I earn. But I do not want a favour which will be reproached to my prince as illegal. Leave me in my butchery!' - Whatever they tried, Yue held firm and remained a butcher. (An example of Daoist moral independence).

F. Yuan Xian lived, in the land of Lu, in a round makeshift hut, with a wall of woven thorny bushes and a roof on which grass was growing. A mat fixed to a branch of a mulberry tree badly closed the opening which served as a door. Two jars with their bottoms out, set into the wall, closed by clear stretched cloth, formed the windows of its two cells. The roof leaked, the floor was damp. In this miserable den, Yuan Xian was seated contentedly playing the flute. - Zi Gong went to pay him a visit, riding in a carriage so wide that it could not enter the lane, dressed in a white robe doubled with purple. Yuan Xian received him, a torn hat on his head, shoes with worn heels on his feet, leaning on a tree branch which served him as a walking-stick. On seeing him, Zi Gong cried out: 'How distressed you are!' - 'Pardon?' said Yuan Xian. 'To lack goods is to be poor. To know, and not to do; that is to be distressed.' - Zi Gong was reduced to silence. Yuan Xian added: 'Acting to please the world, making particular friends under pretext of the general good, studying in order to make oneself admired, teaching in order to enrich oneself, dressing oneself up in a disguise of goodness and fairness, going about sumptuously equipped; all the things you do are things I could never make myself do.'

Zeng Zi lived in the land of Wei. He wore an undoubled robe of coarse cloth. His face betrayed suffering and hunger. The callosities on his hands and feet showed how hard he worked to live. He only had a hot meal once in three days. An article of clothing had to last him ten years. If he had tried to fasten his hat, the worn strap would have broken. If he had tried to put his entire feet into his shoes, the toe part would have come away from the rest. If he had pulled on the sleeves of his robe, they would have stayed in

his hands. And none the less, dressed in rags and old shoes, he sang the hymns of the Shang dynasty, in a voice which resounded in space like the sound of a bronze instrument. The emperor could not persuade him to serve as his minister, the great feudal lords could not persuade him to attach himself to them as a friend. His type was independent and free. He who would hold on to his freedom must renounce bodily comforts. He who would hold on to his life should renounce rank. He who holds to union with the Principle must renounce all attachments.

Confucius said to Yen Hui: 'Hui, listen to me! Your family is poor; why don't you try to obtain a post?' - 'No,' said Yen Hui, 'I don't want any position. I have fifty measures of land in the country, which provides my food, and ten measures in the suburbs, which provides my clothing\*. Meditating on your teaching whilst playing my lute, suffices for my happiness. No, I will not try to obtain a post.' - These words made a great impression on Confucius, who said: 'What a good mind Hui has! I knew well enough in theory that he who has modest tastes will not encumber himself; that he who only preoccupies himself with his interior progress is not affected by any privation; that he who tends towards perfection regards positions lightly. I have even taught these principles for a long time, but only now do I see them applied by Hui. Today, I, the theorist, have received a practical lesson.'

G. Mou, the Marquis of Wei's son, had been nominated to a post at Zhong Shan (near the coast), and he said to Zhan Zi: 'I have come here to the seaside, but my heart is at the court of Wei.' Zhan Zi said: 'Stifle your sadness, or it may do you harm.' - Prince Mou said: 'I have tried, but without success. My sadness is invincible.' - 'Then,' said Zhan Zi, 'give it free rein (by weeping etc.). For, to react violently against a powerful sentiment, is to inflict oneself with a double injury (grief, then the reaction). None of those who act thus, live a long time.' - For this prince, who was used to the court, having to live in a land of rocks and caverns was without doubt harder than it would have been for a man of lesser rank. It is however regrettable for him, for he had what was necessary to tend towards the Principle, and did not attain it. He could have found peace and indifference there.

H. When Confucius was blockaded and surrounded between Chen and Cai, he spent seven days with neither meat nor grain, reduced to living on wild herbs. Despite his exhaustion, he never ceased from playing the lute in the house where he had taken refuge. - Yen Hui, who was gathering herbs outside, heard the disciples Zi Lu

\*Plants for textiles were cultivated near habitations to avoid theft during the night. The theft of cereals is more difficult.



and Zi Gong saying to each other: 'The master has been run out of Lu twice, intercepted once at Wei. At Song they cut down the tree that was sheltering him. He was in great peril at Shang and Zhou. Now he is besieged here. They want him to perish, but dare not kill him; yet he who should do so would certainly not be punished. The master knows this, and plays the lute. Is he who takes so little account of his situation a Sage?' - Yen Hui reported these words to Confucius, who stopped playing, sighed, and said: 'Their minds are without scope. Call them in, that I may speak to them.' - When they had come in, Zi Lu said to Confucius: 'This time it is finished!' - 'No,' said Confucius. 'Whilst the doctrine of a Sage has not been refuted, it is not finished for him. Entered into the lists, for goodness and fairness, in a period of troubles and passions, it is natural that I meet with opposition, but I am not finished because of that. My doctrine is irrefutable, and I will not deviate from it through any persecution. The icy mists of winter only demonstrate with greater brilliance the strength of resistance of the cypress, whose leaves they cannot strip. It will be the same for my doctrine and this incident between Chen and Cai'... That said, with a dignified air, Confucius played his lute and sang again. Zi Lu, converted, grasped a shield and danced a pantomime. Zi Gong said: 'I was ignorant of how high heaven is above the earth' (the Sage above the common). - The ancients who possessed the science of the Principle were equally content in success and failure. For, being equally indifferent to success and failure, they drew their contentment from a superior source, from knowing that success and failure come similarly from the Principle, fatally, inevitably, like heat and cold, wind and rain, in a succession and alternation to which one has only to submit oneself. It was by virtue of this knowledge that Xu You was content on the north of the Ying River, and Gong Bo at the foot of Mount Qiu Shou. (This is a suspect paragraph, probably interpolated. Compare it with chapters 17C, 20D and G).

I. Shun\* offered his empire to his old friend Wu Ze. 'For shame,' said the latter. 'You left the country for the court, and now you wish that I also should degrade myself. I no longer know you'... That said, Wu Ze went and threw himself into the Qing Ling Chasm. - Before attacking Jie (the tyrant), Tang (the future emperor) consulted Bian Sui, who replied: 'That is none of my business'...'Then whom should I consult?' asked Tang... 'I don't know,' said Bian Sui... Tang addressed himself to Wu Guang, who also replied: 'It is none of my business, I don't know'... Then Tang said: 'If I were to ask Yi Yin?'... 'Perfect,' said Wu Guang. 'Coarse and dull, this man has what it needs to serve your designs; moreover he

\*Systematic demolition of Confucian paragons.

has only that'... Advised by Yi Yin, Tang attacked Jie, vanquished him, and then offered the throne to Bian Sui. The latter said: 'My refusal to advise you should have made you understand that I wish to have nothing to do with a thief; and here you are offering me your loot! Must this century be so perverse that a man without conscience should twice try to dirty me by his contact! No one will do me such an injury a third time'... That said, Bian Sui drowned himself in the River Chou. - Then Tang offered the throne to Wu Guang with this patter: 'A Sage (Yi Yin) made the plan (of Jie's dethronement); a brave (Tang) executed it; now the good (Wu Guang) should mount the throne, conforming to the traditions of the ancients'... Wu Guang refused in these terms: 'Dethroning an emperor is to lack etiquette; killing his subjects, is to lack goodness; profiting from another's crimes would be to lack decency. I hold myself to the traditional maxims which forbid accepting any post from an iniquitous master, and treading on the ground of an empire without principles. I refuse to be honoured by you, and wish to see you no more'... That said, Wu Guang tied a large stone on his back, and threw himself into the River Lu.

J. At the beginning of the Zhou dynasty, the two wise brother princes, Bo Yi and Shu Qi, were living at Gu Zhu. Having learnt of the change of dynasty, they said to themselves: 'It appears that a Sage reigns in the west. Let's go and see!' - When they reached the south of Mount Qi (the Zhou capital), Emperor Wu had them received by his brother Dan, who promised on oath wealth and honours if they would serve his house. The two brothers looked at each other, smiling with contempt, and said: 'We are mistaken! What we seek is not here'... They had learnt in the meantime how the change of dynasty had been effected; and they added: 'Once, Emperor Shen Nong, so devoted and respectful, sacrificed for his people, asking nothing for himself. From his conscientious government of his subjects, he took neither glory nor gain for himself. The Zhous, who have taken advantage of the Yin's decadence to invade the empire, are quite other men. They conspired against the emperor, won over his subjects, and used force. They vow to make themselves credible (which is against Daoist simplicity), brag in order to please, and make war for gain. The change in the empire is clearly from bad to worse. In the old days, the ancients served in times of order, and withdrew themselves in times of disorder. Now the empire is in darkness. The Zhous are without virtue. We had better withdraw ourselves and stay pure, rather than dirty ourselves by contact with these usurpers.' - With this determination, the two Sages went north as far as Mount Shou Yang, where they starved to death. - Their example is admirable. Keeping their noble sentiments, they did not let themselves be seduced by wealth and honours. This can be summarized by the maxim: 'Do not be enslaved to the world.'

## Chapter 29. Politicians.

A. Confucius was a friend of Ji, of Liu Xia\*, who had a younger brother known as the Brigand Zhi. This individual had organised an association of nine thousand partisans who did whatever they pleased in the empire, holding princes to ransom, pillaging private properties, rustling, kidnapping women and girls, not even sparing their own close relatives, and pushing impiety as far as not making offerings to their ancestors. As soon as they showed themselves, towns put themselves in a state of defence, and villagers entrenched themselves. Everyone had to suffer from these evildoers. - Confucius said to Liuxia Ji: 'Fathers should take their sons to task, older brothers their younger brothers. If they do not, it is because they do not take their responsibilities to heart. You are one of the finest officers of these times and your younger brother is the Brigand Zhi. This man is the scourge of the empire, and you do not take him to task. I am ashamed for you. I warn you that I am going to give him a sermon in your place.' - Liuxia Ji said: 'It is true that fathers and older brothers should take their sons and younger brothers to task; but when the sons and younger brothers refuse to listen, even if the father or older brother is as good at talking as you are, the result will be nil. Now my younger brother Zhi is a natural hothead with a fiery temper. On top of that he is so strong that he need fear no one, and he is so eloquent that he knows how to make his evil deeds appear good. He only likes those who flatter him, he goes into a rage when anyone contradicts him, and he does not restrain himself from violence. Believe me, keep away from him.' - Confucius did not heed this warning. He set out, Yen Hui driving his chariot and Zi Gong acting as counterweight. He found Zhi established at the south of Mount Tai Shu, his band chopping up human livers for his dinner. Descending from his chariot, Confucius went forward alone as far as the guard, and said to him: 'I, Kong Qiu of Lu, have heard tell of the elevated sentiments of your General; I wish to speak with him'... And having said this, he saluted the guard with respect. The latter went away to notify the Brigand Zhi who became furious with the news, to the point where his eyes shone like stars and his hair stood on end, lifting his bonnet. 'This Kong Qiu,' he said, 'isn't he the sweet talker of Lu? Tell him for my part that he is a driveller who credits his rubbish to King Wen and Emperor Wu, who wears his hat of floral designs and a leather belt, who utters as many stupidities as words, who eats without working and clothes himself without spinning, who pretends it is enough to open his mouth and speak a few words for the distinction between good and evil to

\*The worthy Zhan He, alias Zhan Ji, posthumous name Zhan Hui. Better known as Liuxia Hui or Liuxia Ji, after his native land.

be established, who has led all the princes and educated people astray, who, under cover of preaching piety, sucks up to the strong, noble, and rich. Tell him he is the worst of evildoers, and to clear off quickly or I will have his liver added to the stew which is being prepared for our dinner.' - The guard reported these words to Confucius who still insisted, and told him to say to Zhi that he wished to be received in his tent as a friend of his brother. - The guard notified Zhi who said: 'Let him come.' - Confucius did not wait to be asked twice. He came forward quickly and went towards Zhi saluting. - Full of rage, Zhi stretched out his two legs, placed his sword across them, fixed his eyes on Confucius, and, with the tone of a tigress upset whilst feeding her young, he said: 'Take care Qiu! If you say things that please me, you will live! If you say anything whatever which displeases me, you will die!' - Confucius said: 'Three qualities are above all prized by men; a good bearing, great intelligence, and military ability. Whoever possesses any one of these qualities in an eminent degree is fit to command men. Now, General, I see that you possess eminently all three of these qualities. You are eight feet two inches tall, your eyes shine, your lips are red, your teeth are white like cowries, your voice rings like the sound of a bell; and a man who brings together all these qualities is called the Brigand Zhi! General, although I am unworthy of it, if you will take me as your counsellor, I will use my credit to gain you the favour of all the neighbouring princes; I will have a great city built to be your capital; I will bring together hundreds of thousands of men to be your subjects; I will see that you become a strong and respected feudal prince. General, believe me, give the empire back its life, cease making war, disband your soldiers, so that families may live in peace on their subsistence and make offerings to their ancestors. Follow my advice, and you will acquire the reputation of being wise and brave; all the empire will applaud you.' - Still furious, Zhi replied: 'Come off it, Qiu, you should know that you can only make a monkey out of a fool. Do I need you to teach me that the body my parents gave me is well made? Do you believe that your compliments touch me; I who know that you denigrate me elsewhere more than you have flattered me here? And then, the chimerical blow with which you wish to take me; it's really too crude. But supposing I obtained what you promise me, how long would I keep it? Has the empire not escaped from the descendants of Yao and Shun; aren't the posterity of Emperors Tang and Wu extinct, precisely because their ancestors left them a very rich patrimony which was in consequence much sought-after? Power does not last, and happiness does not consist, as you and like politicians wish us to believe, in these things. In the beginning there were many animals and few men. During the day the latter collected acorns and chestnuts; during the night they sought refuge in the trees out of fear of wild animals. This was called the nest

period... Then came the age of the caves during which men, still naked, collected fuel in summer to keep them warm in winter, the first manifestation of care for the maintenance of human life... Then came the age of Shen Nong, the first agriculturalist, an absolutely carefree age. Men only knew their mother, not their father (there was no marriage). They lived in peace with the elk and the deer. They cultivated sufficient to eat, and spun enough to clothe themselves. No one wronged another. That was the time when everything followed its natural course, in perfection... The Yellow Emperor put an end to this happy age. He assumed imperial power and was the first to make war. He went into battle at Zhou Lu where he spilt blood over an area of one hundred stages by pursuing those he had defeated. Then Yao and Shun invented ministers of state and the administrative machinery. Then Tang revolted and exiled his sovereign Jie; Wu dethroned and executed Emperor Zhou. From that time until our days, the strong have oppressed the weak and the majority have tyrannized the minority. All the emperors and princes have troubled the world, just like the first of their kind. And you, Qiu, have given yourself the mission of propagating the principles of King Wen and Emperor Wu, and you aspire to impose these principles on posterity. It is with this claim that you wear a hat and belt different to those worn by the people, that you hold forth in speech, and strike poses, duping princes and pushing your own interests. You are without contradiction the worst amongst evildoers, and in place of calling me pre-eminently the Brigand Zhi, the people should call you the Brigand Qiu... I will recall the results of your teaching for you. After having bamboozled Zi Lu, you made him disarm and study. The astonished world said Qiu knows how to soften the violent. The illusion did not last. Having tried to assassinate the Prince of Wei, Zi Lu perished, and his salted body (salted so that it would keep longer) was exposed at the eastern gate of the capital of Wei... Should I continue to enumerate the successes of the man of talent, of the great Sage you think yourself to be? They got rid of you twice from Lu. You were expelled from Wei. At Qi you almost had real trouble. You were under siege between Chen and Cai. The entire empire refused to give asylum to the master who had loused up his disciple, Zi Lu. In summary, you have not been of use to yourself nor to others, and you claim that one should hold your doctrine in esteem!.. "This doctrine," you say, "is not my doctrine. It goes back via the ancient sovereigns as far as the Yellow Emperor." Only the common people can be deceived by these famous paragons. Unleashing his wild passions, the Yellow Emperor made the first war and spilt blood on the plain of Zhou Lu. Yao was a bad father. Shun was a bad son. Yu stole the empire in order to give it to his family. Tang banished his sovereign. Wu killed his own sovereign. King Wen put You Li in prison. There you have the six

paragons, the admiration of whom you impose on the common people. Considered closely they were men whose love of their own interests made them act against their consciences and against nature; men whose acts were worthy of profound contempt... And the other great men, did they not all perish victims of their own stupidity? Their utopias were the cause of Bo Yi and Shu Qi dying of starvation and remaining without burial. Bao Jiao's ideal was the cause of his retiring to the forest where he was found dead, on his knees, embracing a tree-trunk. His spite at not being listened to caused Shen Tu Di to tie a rock on his back and jump in the river, where the fish and turtles ate him. The faithful Jie Zi Tui, who went so far as to nourish his Duke Wen with a piece of his own thigh, was so upset by the ingratitude of the latter that he withdrew himself into the forest where he perished in a fire. Wei Shang who had arranged a rendezvous with a beauty under a bridge, allowed himself to be drowned by the rising waters rather than fail to keep his word to her. In what, I ask you, does the lot of these six men differ from that of a crushed dog, a pig whose throat is cut, or a beggar dead from starvation? Their passions caused their death. They would have done better to have maintained their lives in peace... Again you give as examples faithful ministers such as Bi Gan and Wu Zixu. Now Bi Gan was put to death and his heart was torn out; Wu Zixu had to commit suicide and his body was thrown into the river. There you can see what their faithfulness was worth to them, to become the laughing-stock of the public... Therefore, of all the true to life examples you quote as proof of your system, not one convinces me, but quite the opposite. If then you should put forward arguments from beyond the grave, I can tell you that such things mean nothing to me... For my part, I am going to give you a practical lesson on what humanity really is. Man likes the satisfaction of his eyes, ears, mouth, and instincts. He has but the duration of his life in which to satisfy his inclinations, an average of sixty years, sometimes eighty, and rarely a hundred. Yet one must subtract from these years the periods of illness, of sadness, and of misfortunes; so much so that in a month of life a man has scarcely four or five days of real contentment and frank laughter. The course of time is infinite, but the lot of life assigned to each one is finite, and death puts an end to it in its time. An existence is only, in the succession of the centuries, like the leap of a horse across a ditch. Now in my opinion he who does not know how to make his short life last as long as possible, and does not, during that time, satisfy all the inclinations of his nature, understands nothing of what humanity really is... In conclusion, Qiu, I deny all that you affirm, and I uphold everything you deny. Take care not to reply a single word. Clear off quickly; fool, braggart, utopian, liar; you have nothing of what it takes to put men back on their road. I will say nothing

more to you.' - Confucius saluted humbly and left in haste. When he came to climb into his chariot, he was so flustered that he had to try three times before he could find and grip the handrail. With no lustre in his eyes, his face livid, he leant on the handrail, his head bowed, gasping for breath. As he was entering the town by the eastern gate, he met Liuxia Ji. 'Ah, there you are,' said the latter. 'It is some time since I saw you. You look weary. You haven't by any chance been to see Zhi?' - 'I have been to see him,' said Confucius, raising his eyes to heaven and sighing deeply... 'Ah,' said Liuxia Ji; 'and has he allowed a single one of the things you said to him?' - 'He hasn't agreed with any of it,' said Confucius. 'You were right. This time I, Qiu, have done like the man who cauterised himself when he was not ill. I have tugged at the tiger's moustache, and have been lucky to escape its teeth.'

B. Zi Zhang who was studying with a view to becoming a politician, said to Man Gou De: 'Why don't you go in for the way of opportunism (that of Confucius and the politicians of the period)? If you do not do so, no one will give you a post, and you will never get on. This way is the surest for becoming rich and famous, and one is also in distinguished company.' - 'Is that really so?' said Man Gou De. 'For my part the politicians shock me, by the immodesty with which they lie, and their intrigues to bamboozle their partisans. I prefer natural freedom to their false opportunism.' - 'Freedom,' said Zi Zhang; 'Jie and Zhou took it in everything. They were both emperors, and yet if you now call a thief a Jie or a Zhou he will consider himself to have been grievously offended, so much did their abuse of freedom cause Jie and Zhou to be held in contempt by even the least of people. Whereas Confucius and Mo Zi, plebeian and poor, have acquired through opportunism a reputation such that, if you were to call a minister of state a Confucius or a Mo Zi, this great person would swagger, considering himself greatly honoured. This proves that it is not nobility of rank that imposes itself on men, but the wisdom of their conduct.' - 'Is that really true?' replied Man Gou De. 'Those who have stolen a little are locked up in prison. Those who have stolen a lot are seated on thrones. To steal in grand style, could this be opportunism and wisdom?... And then, are the politicians really as pure as you say? One finds them posted like beggars at the door of great thieves (feudal princes). Xiao Bo, Duke Huan of Qi, killed his elder brother in order to marry his widow; and despite that Guan Zhong consented to become his minister, and by wicked means procured for him the hegemony over the other feudal lords. Confucius accepted a present of silks from Tian Cheng Zi, the assassinator of his prince and usurper of his principality. Natural morality would have called for these two politicians to censure their patrons. They acted, on the contrary, like begging dogs before them. It is their opportunism

(selfish, looking for personal gain) which made them sink so low as to strangle their consciences. It is for them that was written: "Oh, the good! Oh, the evil!.. Those who have succeeded are the first, those who have not succeeded are the last." - Zi Zhang replied: 'If you abandon all things to natural freedom, if you do not allow any artificial institutions, there will be no order in the world; no more ranks, no more precedence, even the family will no longer be.' - Man Gou De said: 'Have your politicians, who attach so much importance to these things, really observed them? Let's have a look at your paragons. Yao put his oldest son to death. Shun exiled his maternal uncle. What respect for the family!.. Tang exiled his suzerain Jie, Wu killed Zhou. What respect for ranks!.. King Ji supplanted his elder brother, the Duke of Zhou killed his. What respect for precedence!.. Ah yes, the disciples of Confucius speak gently, those of Mo Zi preach universal charity, and look how they act in practice.' - The discussion was not settled, so Zi Zhang and Man Gou De went before an arbitrator, who pronounced thus: 'Both of you are right and wrong, as always happens when one takes too entrenched a position. The common people only see wealth; the politician is taken only by the quest for reputation. To achieve their goals they struggle and wear themselves out. Wise is he who considers the yes and no from the centre of the circumference\*, and who lets the wheel turn. Wise is he who acts when the circumstances are favourable, and who ceases to act when it is time not to act. Wise is he who does not become impassioned for any ideal. All pursuit of an ideal is fatal. Obstinacy in loyalty caused Bi Gan to have his heart torn out, and Wu Zixu to have his eyes gouged out. Relentless adherence to tell the truth, to keep their word, caused Zhi Gong to witness against his father, and Wei Sheng to let himself be drowned under a bridge. Inflexible disinterestedness caused Bao Zi to die on his knees at the foot of a tree, and Shen Zi to be ruined by the artifices of Ji from Li. Confucius did not honour the memory of his mother, Kuang Zhang was hunted by his father, because of exaggerated ritual scruples. These are all known historical facts. They prove that every extreme position becomes false, that any exaggerated obstinacy leads to ruin. Wisdom consists in holding oneself at the centre, neutral and indifferent.'

C. Inquietude said to Tranquillity: 'Everyone esteems fortune and reputation. The crowd courts those who have arrived (at fame and fortune), falling down before them and exalting them. The satisfaction of these experiences makes them live a long time. Why don't you push yourself? Is your apathy due to a lack of intelligence or ability, or is it obstinacy in certain principles peculiar to yourself?' Tranquillity replied: 'I envy neither reputation nor fortune,

\*Compare with chapter 2 C.



because these things do not bring happiness. It is all too clear that those who push themselves, making litter of any principles which hinder them, forming their conscience according to any historical precedent whatever, live neither with satisfaction nor for a long time. This is clear, whatever you say. Their life, like that of most common people, is nothing but a tissue of work and rest, pleasure and pain, and of gropings and uncertainties. Whatever advances they make, they remain exposed to reverses and unhappiness.' - 'So be it,' said Inquietude; 'but they always enjoy what they possess. They can obtain for themselves what the superior man and the Sage have not. One lends one's arms, intelligence, and talents, to one who has reached an elevated position. Even one who has reached only a lesser position, is still privileged. He has all the pleasures of the senses and all the satisfactions of nature.' - 'Repulsive egoism,' said Tranquillity; 'is that happiness?.. In my view the Sage only takes for himself strictly what he must, leaving the rest for the others. He doesn't get involved; he doesn't struggle. Any agitation, any competition, is a sign of morbid passion. The Sage gives, withholds himself, effaces himself, renounces, without making a merit of it and without waiting for anyone to force him to do so. When destiny lifts him to the top, he imposes himself on no one, he leans on no one; he thinks of the changes to come, of the eventual turn of the wheel, and he is in consequence modest. Yao and Shun acted this way. They did not treat the people with goodness, but they did not do them any harm, through abstraction and precaution. Shan Quan and Xu You refused the throne from love of peace and security. The world praises these four men, who nevertheless acted against its principles. They acquired fame without having sought it.' - 'In any case,' said Inquietude, 'they did not get it for nothing. In place of the sufferings of the administration, they inflicted themselves with a living death of abstinence and privation.' - 'No,' said Tranquillity. 'They lived an ordinary life, which is the only possible happiness. All that exceeds it makes one unhappy. With his ears full of music and his mouth full of goodies, the upstart is not happy. The worry of maintaining his position causes him to pant and sweat. Neither wealth nor rank can extinguish the hunger and thirst which torment him, the interior fire that devours him. When his warehouses are full to overflowing, he still desires more, and he will not consent to give up anything. His life is spent in mounting guard over the useless things he has amassed, in worry and fear. He barricades himself inside his house and dare not go out without escort (from fear of kidnappers). Isn't this real misery? Those who suffer from it do not realise it. Unconscious in the present, they no longer know how to look at the future. When their time comes, they will be surprised, and all their goods will not be worth a day's respite. Truly he who tires his mind and wears out his body to end like that, is crazy.'

## Chapter 30. Swordsmen.

A. King Wen of Zhao had a passionate love of fencing. Professional swordsmen flocked to his court. He gave hospitality to more than three thousand of these men, who fought each other in front of him, whenever he pleased, day or night. Every year more than a hundred were killed or seriously wounded in these fights. But these accidents did not cool the king's passion. These goings-on had lasted three years. The kingdom was much neglected, and its neighbours judged that the time was favourable to conquer it. Having learnt this, Prince Li, the heir, was very upset. He called his friends together and said: 'I will give a thousand taels to the one who can persuade the king to give up his combats'... 'Only Zhuang Zi is capable of doing that,' said the prince's friends. - Straight away the prince sent couriers to invite Zhuang Zi and to offer him a thousand taels. Zhuang Zi refused the money, but followed the envoys. 'What do you want of me, and why did you offer me a thousand taels?' he asked the prince. - 'I have heard tell that you are a Sage,' said the latter, 'that is why I began by respectfully offering you a thousand taels, whilst waiting for what will follow. You refused my present; how dare I tell you, now, what I wish you to do?' - 'I heard,' said Zhuang Zi, 'that you wish me to cure your father, the king, of a certain passion. If I offend him, he will kill me; if I fail, perhaps you will do the same; in either case your thousand taels would be too much (would be of no use to me). If I please the king and make him happy, then your thousand taels would be too little. That is why I refused your money.' - 'Good,' said the prince. 'Our king only likes swordsmen.' - 'I know,' said Zhuang Zi. 'I am good at fencing.' - 'Perfect,' said the prince. 'There remains only one thing. The king's swordsmen all wear a turban with a tassel; they look fierce and speak loudly. The king takes only to this kind of person. If you were presented to him dressed as a scholar, he would not even look at you.' - 'Then,' said Zhuang Zi, 'make me a similar costume.' Three days later the prince presented Zhuang Zi, dressed in the appropriate manner, to the king. The king received him with a naked sword in his hand. Zhuang Zi went towards him slowly (to avoid being taken for an assassin in disguise), and did not salute him (for the same reason). 'Why,' the king asked him, 'did you have yourself introduced by my son?' - 'I have heard tell,' said Zhuang Zi, 'that you like duels. I should like to show you what I can do.' - 'What can you do?' asked the king. - 'This,' said Zhuang Zi: 'Line up your swordsmen in a long file and I will run my sword through all of them.' - 'Ah,' said the king, delighted, 'you have no equal.' - 'And here is my theory,' said Zhuang Zi: 'I attack gracefully, I let the adversary come on, he becomes excited, I pretend to give way, he becomes carried away, and then I run him through. Would you like me

to give a demonstration?' - 'Not so fast,' said the king a little worried. 'First go and rest; I will send for you when all is ready.'

**B.** Then, for the next seven days, the king kept his swordsmen in training. More than sixty were killed or wounded. The king chose five or six of the best, spaced them out at the end of the great hall, sword in hand and ready to fight, and then, having called Zhuang Zi, he said to him: 'I am going to set you before these masters'... 'I have waited long enough,' said Zhuang Zi. - 'What are the dimensions of your sword?' asked the king. - 'Any sword will do for me,' said Zhuang Zi. 'However there are three which I prefer. It's your choice.' - 'Explain yourself,' said the king. 'They are,' said Zhuang Zi, 'the emperor's sword, the vassal's sword, and the common sword.' - 'What is the emperor's sword?' asked the king... Zhuang Zi said: 'It is that which covers everything within the four frontiers, extending even as far as the neighbouring barbarians, and reigning from the western mountains to the eastern sea. Following the course of the two principles and the five elements, of the laws of justice and clemency, it rests in spring and summer (the seasons of work), it is rampant in autumn and winter (seasons of executions and wars). Nothing can resist this blade when taken from its sheath and brandished. It forces everyone to submission. That is the emperor's sword.' - Surprised, the king asked: 'What is the vassal's sword?'... 'It is,' said Zhuang Zi, 'a weapon made of bravery, fidelity, courage, loyalty, and wisdom. Brandished over a principality, conforming to the laws of heaven and earth and of the times, this blade maintains order and peace. Dreadful like thunder, it prevents any rebellion. That is the vassal's sword.' - 'And what is the common sword?' asked the king... 'It is,' said Zhuang Zi, 'the iron which is in the hands of certain men who wear a turban with a tassel, who roll their ferocious eyes and speak loudly, who cut each other's throats or pierce each other's livers and lungs in pointless duels; who kill each other like fighting cocks, without any useful service to the country. O king, you who are perhaps predestined to become master of the empire, is it not beneath you to so value that weapon?' The king understood. He took Zhuang Zi by the arm, and took him to the high table where the feast was served. Quite taken out of himself, the king wandered around the table... 'Pull yourself together and take your place,' said Zhuang Zi; 'I will speak no more about swords (I will shame you no more).' - During the following three months King Wen shut himself up in his apartments, reflecting on his behaviour. During this time his fighters killed each other. (Some commentaries explain that they committed suicide, from spite. In any event the species became extinct and the abuse ceased).

## Chapter 31. The Old Fisherman.

**A.** Whilst walking in the Zi Wei forest, Confucius sat down to rest near the Xiang Tan Knoll. His disciples took out their books. The master strummed his lute and began to sing. - The song attracted an old fisherman. His hair uncombed, his sleeves rolled up, the old man alighted from his boat, climbed the bank, approached, placed his left hand on his knee and his chin in his right hand, and listened attentively. When the song was finished he beckoned Zi Gong and Zi Lu, who came over to him. 'Who is he?' asked the old man, indicating Confucius. - 'He is the Sage of Lu,' said Zi Lu. - 'What is his name?' asked the old man. - 'He is called Kong,' said Zi Lu. - 'And what does this Kong do?' asked the Old man. - Zi Gong replied: 'He endeavours to revive sincerity, loyalty, goodness and fairness, rites and music, for the greatest good of the Principality of Lu, and the empire.' - 'Is he a prince?' asked the old man. - 'No,' said Zi Gong. - 'Is he a minister?' asked the old man. - 'No,' replied Zi Gong again. - The old man smiled and withdrew. Zi Gong heard him murmuring: 'Goodness, fairness; it's very nice no doubt, but he will be lucky if he doesn't lose in this game. In any case the worry and the harm he causes himself will prejudice him from true perfection by wearing out his mind and body. How far he is from knowledge of the Principle.' - Zi Gong reported these words to Confucius, who quickly pushed aside the lute lying on his knees, got up saying, 'he is a Sage,' and went down the bank to ask the old man to talk with him. The latter was just leaning on his gaff in order to push off his boat. On seeing Confucius he stopped and turned towards him. Confucius approached him saluting. - 'What do you want of me?' the old man asked him. - Confucius said: 'You have just said something which I do not clearly understand. I respectfully beg you to kindly instruct me for my benefit.' - 'This desire is most praiseworthy,' said the old man. -

**B.** Confucius prostrated himself, then, having straightened up, he said: 'Since my youth until this age of sixty-nine years (the next to the last year of his life), I, Qiu, have studied ceaselessly, without having been instructed in the supreme science (Daoism). Now that the opportunity has come to me, judge the avidity with which I am going to listen to you.' - The old man said: 'I don't know if we shall understand each other, for the common lot is that only persons with similar sentiments understand each other. In any case, and with much risk, I am going to tell you my principles, and to apply them to your conduct... You occupy yourself exclusively with the affairs of men, the emperor, lords, officials, plebeians; they are your interests. Let's speak of them. You attempt to take these four categories to task, to oblige them to conduct themselves well, the final result being a perfect order in which everyone will live happy and content. Can you really create a world without evil and

troubles?.. It is enough, to afflict the plebeian, that his field gives no harvest, his roof leaks, he lacks food or clothing, they impose a new tax on him, the women of the house argue, or the young lack respect for their elders. Do you really intend to do away with all these things?.. The officials are sad because of the difficulties of their tasks, their failures, the negligence of their subordinates, of the fact that their merits are not recognized, and that they are not promoted. Can you really change all that?.. The lords complain of the disloyalty of their officials, the rebellions of their subjects, the clumsiness of their artisans, the poor quality of the rents which are paid to them in kind, the obligation to appear often at court with their hands full, and of the fact that the emperor is not content with their presents. Can you do away with all that?.. The emperor is afflicted by disorders in the yin and the yang, heat and cold, which upset agriculture and cause the people to suffer. He is afflicted by the quarrels and wars of his feudal lords, which cost many men their lives. He is afflicted because his rules on rites and music are badly observed, his funds are used up, relationships are badly respected, and the people behave badly. How can you suppress all these disorders? Have you the quality, have you the power, for that? You who are neither emperor, nor lord, nor even a minister; a simple private person; you pretend to reform humanity. Isn't this wishing for more than you can do?.. Before seeing the realization of your dream, you must first of all deliver men from the eight manias which I am going to enumerate for you: The mania to interfere in what is not one's business; the mania to speak without prior consideration; to lie; flatter; denigrate, sow discord; make a false impression on one's friends; and the mania to intrigue and insinuate. Are you the man who can make all these vices disappear?.. And the four following abuses; desire to innovate in order to make oneself famous; usurpation of the merit of others in order to promote oneself; obstinacy in one's faults despite remonstrances; obstinacy in one's ideas despite warnings. Can you change all that?.. If you can do that, then you can begin to expound your theories on goodness and fairness to men, with some chance that they will understand something.' -

C. His face changed and sighing with emotion, Confucius prostrated himself as thanks for the lesson, got up and said: 'I admit that I am a utopian, but I am not an evildoer. Why is it that I am honoured everywhere, and then persecuted and expelled. What is it that attracts all these ills to me? I don't understand it.' - 'You don't understand?' said the old man astonished; 'truly you are a most limited man. It is your mania to occupy yourself with all and everything, to pose as censor and universal magistrate, which draws these tribulations to you. Listen to this story: A man was afraid of his shadow and his footprints. To save himself, he started to run. Now the more steps he took, the more footprints he left; no

matter how quickly he ran, his shadow did not leave him. Persisting despite all, thinking he would succeed through gaining speed, he ran so fast that he dropped dead. The imbecile, if he had sat down in the shade his body would no longer have projected a shadow; if he had kept still, his feet would have produced no footprints; he only had to keep himself in peace and all his ills would have disappeared... And you, who, instead of keeping yourself in peace, make a profession of quibbling about goodness and fairness, similarities and differences, and I don't know what idle subtleties; you are astonished by the consequences of this mania, you don't understand that it is by irritating everyone that you have drawn universal hatred on yourself? Believe me, from the day when you no longer occupy yourself with yourself, and apply yourself to the cultivation of your natural basis, from the day when, returning to others what should be returned to them, you leave them in peace, that will be the day when you will no longer have any worries. It is through closing your eyes to yourself and opening them too much to others that you have attracted misfortune.' -

D. All undone, Confucius asked: 'What is my natural basis?' - 'The natural basis,' said the old man, 'is the simplicity, sincerity, and uprightness that everyone has at birth. That alone influences men. No one is touched by a false verbosity, by tears, shouts, or the pathos of a comedian. On the other hand true sentiments communicate themselves to others, without the artifice of words or gestures. It is because they come from the natural basis, from native truth. All true virtues are born from this basis, the affection of parents and the piety of children, loyalty towards one's prince, infectious joy at festivals, and sincere passion at funerals. These sentiments are spontaneous and have nothing artificial about them, whereas the rites, in which you try to enmesh all the acts of life, are a factitious comedy. The natural basis is the part each man has received from universal nature. Its dictum is invariable. It is the unique rule of conduct of the Sage, who scorns all human influence. Imbeciles do the opposite; they draw nothing from their own basis and are at the mercy of the influence of others. They do not know how to esteem the truth that is within them, but share in the frivolous and whimsical affections of the common people. It is a pity, Master, that you have spent all your life in untruth, and have only heard the truth expounded so lately.' -

E. Confucius prostrated himself, got up, saluted, and said: 'What fortune that I have met you! What favour from heaven! Ah, Master, do not judge me unworthy to become your servant, so that by serving you I may have the opportunity of learning more. Please tell me where you live. I will come to live with you in order to receive instruction.' - 'No,' said the old man. 'The saying goes: "Only reveal the mysteries to one who is capable of following you; don't reveal them to one who is incapable of understanding them."

Your prejudices are too ingrained to be curable. Seek elsewhere. I am leaving you'... And saying that, the old man pushed on his gaff and disappeared with his boat amongst the green reeds. -

F. Although Yen Yuan had prepared the chariot for the return journey, and Zi Lu was holding the reins ready, Confucius could not tear himself away from the bank. At last, when the wash from the boat had entirely disappeared, and no more noise from the gaff reached his ears, he decided, with regret, to take his place in the chariot. Zi Lu, who walked alongside, said to him: 'Master, I have now served you a long time. I have never seen you show so much respect and deference to anyone at all. Received by princes and lords and treated by them as an equal, you have always been haughty and disdainful. And today, in front of that old man leaning on his gaff, you bowed down at a right angle to listen to him, and prostrated yourself before replying to him. Aren't these marks of veneration somewhat excessive? We disciples are surprised by them. On what grounds was this old fisherman worthy of such demonstrations?' - Leaning on the handrail, Confucius sighed and said: 'Lu, you are decidedly incorrigible; my teaching slides, without effect, over your thick skull. Come closer and listen! Not to venerate an old man is to be lacking in the Rites. Not to honour a Sage is to lack judgement. Not to bow before the virtue which shines in another is to do ill to oneself. Remember that, dolt!.. And if that is true of all virtue, how much more is it true of the science of the Principle, through which all that is subsists, knowledge of which is life and ignorance of which is death. Conforming to the Principle gives success, opposing it is certain ruin. It is a Sage's duty to honour the science of the Principle wherever he finds it. Now this old fisherman possesses it. How could I not have honoured him as I did?'

## Chapter 32. Wisdom.

**A.** Lie Yukou (Lie Zi), who was going to Qi, turned back when only half-way there. He met Bo Hun Wu Ren who said: 'Why are you coming back?' - 'Because I was afraid,' said Lie Yukou. - 'Afraid of what?' said Bo Hun Wu Ren. - 'I had been in six soup kitchens, and five times I was served first.' - 'And you were afraid,' said Bo Hun Wu Ren... 'of what?' - 'I thought,' said Lie Yukou, 'That despite my strict incognito, my qualities were no doubt recognizable through my body. For how could one otherwise explain this deference on the part of such common people? If I had gone as far as Qi, perhaps the prince, having himself also known my ability, would have burdened me with looking after his principality which fatigues him. It is that eventuality which frightened me and caused me to retrace my steps.' - 'That was well thought,' said Bo Hun Wu Ren, 'but I am afraid it will only start again at your home.' - And in fact, a short while later, Bo Hun Wu Ren went to visit Lie Yukou, and saw a great quantity of shoes in front of his door. He stopped, rested his chin on the end of his stick, mused for some time, and then went away. However the porter had informed Lie Yukou. Seizing his sandals, without taking time to put them on, he ran after his friend. Having caught up with him at the outer gate, he said: 'Why are you leaving like this, without giving me any advice?' - 'What's the good of it, henceforth,' said Bo Hun Wu Ren. 'Did I not warn you that it would only start again at your home? I know well that you have done nothing to attract all this crowd, but neither have you done anything to keep them at a distance. Now that you have let yourself be distracted, what use will my advice be to you? Without doubt your visitors will benefit from your qualities, but you will suffer from their conversation. Such people will teach you nothing. The conversation of ordinary people is a poison, not a food, for a man such as you. What's the use of these intimacies with people who feel and think differently? It is involvement with the ordinary, such as you have, that exhausts the able and fatigues the wise. And for whom? For frivolous types and nonentities who know nothing more than taking a walk between meals, drifting to adventure like an unmanned boat floating aimlessly downstream, having an interview from time to time with a Sage to distract their boredom.'

**B.** A certain Huan of the Principality of Zheng, who had endlessly recited the official books for three years, was promoted to the rank of scholar. This promotion made all of his family illustrious. To prevent his younger brother from eclipsing him, the new scholar made him embrace the doctrines of Mo Di. It followed that the two brothers never stopped debating, and, as the father took the side of the younger against the elder, there was perpetual dispute in the



house. After ten years of this and unable to bear it any longer, Huan committed suicide. The animosity of the father and brother survived his death. They did not visit his tomb and did not make any offerings for him. One day Huan appeared to his father in a dream, and said: 'Why do you treat me thus? Was it not I who made your second son a follower of Mo Di, whose doctrines you like so much? You should recognise me for having done that'... Since that time Huan received his offerings. - This shows that the author of men (the Principle) does not repay intentions so much as the accomplishment, through them, of destiny. Huan, in making his brother a follower of Mo Di, was moved by a feeling of low egoism, like those who forbid others to drink water from their well. However, in doing this he acted well, for destiny wished his brother to become a follower of Mo Di, and all that followed from it. Therefore he escaped the chastisement of heaven, as the ancients would say. His action was counted for him, his intention was not held against him.

C. The Sage differs from the common in that he lives peacefully and avoids things which cause him trouble. The common people do quite the opposite, seeking trouble and fleeing from peace. - For he who knows the Principle, it is still necessary to keep silent about it, which is difficult, says Zhuang Zi. Knowing, and remaining silent, is perfection. Knowing, and speaking, is imperfection. The ancients tended towards the perfect. - Zhu Pingman learnt the art of killing dragons from Zhi Liyi. He paid his entire fortune of one thousand pieces of gold for this formula. He practised for three whole years. When he was sure he had mastered it, he never did nor said anything. - 'Then what's the good of it? When one is capable, it is necessary to show it,' say the common people... The Sage never says 'it is necessary.' From 'it is necessary' come troubles, wars, and ruin. - Entangled in multiple details, encumbered by material worries, the mediocre man cannot tend towards the Principle of all things, towards the great incorporeal unity. It is reserved for the superior man to concentrate his energy on what was before the beginning, to rejoice in contemplation of the obscure and indeterminate primordial being, such as it was then when there existed only the formless waters, surging forth in unmixed purity. O men, you are studying straw, and are ignorant of the great repose (in the total science of the Principle).

D. A certain Cao Shang, a politician of Song, was sent by his prince to the King of Qin. He set off with a fairly modest equipage, and returned with a hundred cart-loads of presents from the King of Qin, whom he had greatly pleased. He said to Zhuang Zi: 'I could never be content to live as you do down a village side street, badly dressed and with worn shoes, thin and emaciated

through poverty and starvation. I prefer courting princes. It has just gained me one hundred cart-loads of presents.' - Zhuang Zi replied: 'I know the King of Qin's tariff. He gives one cart-load of presents to the surgeon who opens an abscess for him; he gives five cart-loads to the one who licks his piles. The more vile the service rendered to him, the better he pays. What did you do for him to receive even more than the one who licks his piles? Get out of my sight!'

E. Duke Ai of Lu asked Yen He: 'If I were to make Zhong Ni (Confucius) my prime minister, would it be good for my dukedom?' - 'Your dukedom would find itself in great danger,' said Yen He. 'Zhong Ni is a man of fine details (a painter of fans), a great talker, making things up in order to please, discussing in order to make an effect. He only admits his own ideas, and follows only his own imagination. Then, what good would it do to your people? If you were to make him minister, you would soon regret it. Turning men away from the true, and teaching them the false, does them no good. And in what he does, this man seeks his own advantage. Acting thus, is not acting like heaven, and it gives no benefit. If you were to introduce a merchant into your hierarchy of officials, public opinion would be offended. It would be much more offended if you were to make a minister of this political dealer. He will succeed in nothing, and end up badly. Exterior crimes are punished by the executioner, interior crimes (the ambition of Confucius) by the yin and the yang (by wear of the body and premature death). The Sage alone escapes the penal sanction.'

F. Confucius said: 'The human heart is more difficult to reach than the mountains and rivers; its sentiments are more uncertain than those of heaven. For the celestial realm has exterior movements by which one may guess its intentions; whereas man's exterior does not betray his inner feelings, when he does not wish it to. Some appear controlled although they are impassioned; others seem worn out, when in fact they are able; others seem simple, but are full of ambition; others appear rigid, when they are in fact too flexible; others seem slow, who are hasty. Some who seem thirsty for justice, fear it like fire. Therefore the Sage never relies on appearances. He tests his men; close to him to assure himself of their respect; on a far-off mission, to prove their fidelity. In trusting them to deal with affairs, he notes their talent. Through questions put unexpectedly, he notes their knowledge. In fixing dates for them, he notes their exactitude. By enriching them, he learns about their spirit of benevolence. By exposing them to danger, he tests their courage. By getting them drunk, he learns their inner feelings. By placing them in contact with women, he ascertains the degree of their continence. These nine tests enable

the superior man to be distinguished from the common man\*.'

**G.** When Kao Fu the Straight received his first post, he lowered his head, with the second he bowed his back; when they imposed a third on him, he fled; in him there is a good model. Ordinary people do quite otherwise. With their first post they hold their head high; with the second they travel with airs and graces in their carriages; with the third they use familiarities with those who are their superiors through family, rank, or age; the ancients never acted like this. - Nothing is more fatal than interested conduct, with its intrigues and afterthoughts. - Nothing ruins more than admiring one's work while deprecating that of others. - Eight things, which seem advantageous, are ruinous; these are to excel one's beauty, beard, figure, corpulence, strength, eloquence, bravery, and audacity. Three things which seem to be faults, on the contrary often procure fortune; these are lack of character, indecision, and timidity. Six things fill up the mind with thoughts, memories, and preoccupations; these are affable conversation which makes friends, violent behaviour which makes enemies, concern for goodness and fairness which distracts completely, caring for health which engenders hypochondria, discussion with scholars which gives the taste for study, relationships with great men which makes for ambition, and frequenting the common people which gives one the desire to use every occasion for profiting one's business.

**H.** A politician in quest of a master to serve had paid court to the King of Song, and received ten cart-loads of presents which he showed to Zhuang Zi with a puerile ostentation. Zhuang Zi said to him: 'A poor family lived by the river, laboriously weaving mats (a poorly paid craft). The son of the family dived under the water and brought up a pearl worth a good thousand pieces of gold. As soon as the father saw it, he said: "Take a stone and break it, quickly. Pearls of this size are only found at the bottom of an abyss, under a black dragon's chin. No doubt the dragon was sleeping when you took it. When he awakes, he will look for it, and should he find it here, it would be to our loss"... Now the Kingdom of Song is also an abyss, and its king is worse than the black dragon. No doubt he was distracted when you put your hands on these ten cart-loads of good things. If he should change his mind, you will be crushed under his foot.'

**I.** A prince sent an invitation to Zhuang Zi to become his minister, and the latter replied to the envoy: 'The ox\*\* destined for sacrifice

\*Confucianism, cunning, astute, meticulous. For the Daoist it is union with the Principle that makes the superior man, with the breadth of view that follows from it.

\*\*Cf. ch. 17 E.

is dressed in an embroidered cloth and receives choice food. But one day they take it to the great temple to be slaughtered. At that moment it would have preferred to have been the commonest ox of all, on the worst pasture of all. It is the same for princes' ministers; honours first, disgrace and death in its time.'

J. When Zhuang Zi was close to death, his disciples intended to collect money amongst themselves in order to give him a more decent funeral. 'I want none of that,' said the dying man... 'I will have enough with heaven and earth as a bier, the sun, moon, and stars as jewels (which they put on the coffins), and with the whole of nature as my procession. Could you give me better than this great luxury?' - 'No,' said the disciples, 'we will not leave your corpse unburied, a prey to crows and vultures.' - 'And to avoid this,' said Zhuang Zi, 'you will have him devoured underground by ants, depriving the birds in order to deliver him to the insects. Is this just?' - Through these supreme words, Zhuang Zi showed his faith in the identity of life and death, and his scorn for all vain and useless conventions. What is the use of trying to flatten what is not flat? What is the good of make-believe? What proportion have rites and offerings to the mystery of the beyond? The senses suffice only for superficial observation, the mind alone penetrating and convincing. Vain rites and false images come from the common people using only their eyes, and not their minds. The Sage disdains these things.

## Chapter 33. Diverse Schools.

A. Many recipes for governing the world have been invented by different authors, each one giving his own as the most perfect. It now turns out that all of them were insufficient. One procedure alone is effective, to allow the Principle to act, without counter-acting it. It is everywhere, penetrating everything. If the transcendent influences descending from heaven and rising from earth have produced Sages, it is thanks to it, immanent in the universal whole. The closer a man is united with the Principle, the more perfect he is. The superior degrees of this union made celestial men, transcendent men, superior men. Then came the Sages, who knew speculatively that heaven was the way the Principle manifested itself to the senses; that the Principle was the origin of all, its action the root of all; and that everything came from it by way of evolution and return. Finally the princes applied these ideas in practice, through their beneficent goodness, their rational equity, the rites which rule conduct, music which produces friendly understanding, a perfume of kindliness which penetrates all. Thus did the princes of antiquity, counselled by their Sages. They distinguished cases and applied the laws to them. They qualified and denominated. They got to the bottom of all things through consideration and examination. Finally, all being clarified, they took measures as clearly defined as one can count one, two, three, four. Because the hierarchy of officials functioned correctly, affairs followed their courses, and the care of the people became the great concern. Livestock rearing was encouraged; children and old people, orphans and widows, became the object of great anxiety; and all that could be done for the common good was done. In taking this trouble, the ancients collaborated with the transcendent influences of heaven and earth. They nourished the living, maintained peace, and extended their kindness to all. They drew their applications from perfectly fathomed principles, acting in all directions, on the most diverse things. The old laws transmitted from age to age, conserved still in a great number of the histories, bear witness to the theoretical and practical science of the ancients. - Then came the Odes, the Annals, and the Rites, the treatises on music, the scholars of Zou and Lu, and the official masters of principalities. According to them the Odes are a code of moral behaviour, the Annals a repository of facts, the Rites a rule of conduct, Music a means for producing concord, the Mutations a means of knowing the movements of the yin and the yang, the Chronicles a means of distinguishing true reputation from false. Spreading from the central provinces throughout the entire empire, these writings have become the theme on which scholars exercise themselves. - Then came the time when the empire had fallen into a great disorder, and, being deprived of great Sages, other principles were

invented, debating commenced, and each one claimed to be right. It was like a dispute of the ears and eyes with the mouth and nose, which could never end in agreement, each sense being right, but only with regard to its own object. Thus the different schools each have their own speciality, good in its time and place; but as none of them embrace everything, they have no right to exclude the others. How can a single scholar, squatting in a corner, arrogate to himself the judgement of the universe and its laws, and everything that the ancients did and said? Who is qualified to set himself up thus as judge of things and affairs?.. Since the science of the Principle has fallen into neglect, men no longer act except under the influence of their passions, the chiefs of the various schools arrogating to themselves this right to judge and condemn all and everything. They lose sight of the primordial unity, which had been the great rule of the ancients. By their different explanations, they split up what was once the one doctrine of the empire.

**B.** Let us speak first about the followers of Mo Zi. To transmit the integral customs to future generations, not to go to extremes of luxury or ceremony, to avoid life's conflicts by great moderation, all these are rules of the ancients. Mo Zi and his disciple Qin Huali are smitten by them with passion, and in consequence they exaggerate them. They do away absolutely with music. Under pretext of economy, they reduce the rules of mourning to nothing. In the name of universal charity, Mo Zi enjoins us to do good to everyone, and forbids all litigation, all anger. He does not condemn science, but ordains that the savants remain without distinction, at the same level as the common people. In doing this he goes against the ancients and himself... The symphonies of the ancients, whose titles have been conserved for us by history, afford sufficient proof that they were fond of music. Their rules concerning coffins show that they intended, for funerals, a luxury proportional to status. Therefore when Mo Zi prohibited music, and wanted all coffins to be identical, he went against the ancients. He violated also his own law of universal charity, for he did violence to human nature by prohibiting song and tears, which are a natural indispensable comfort for man. To wish man to suffer stoically without cease, and be finally summarily interred; is this charity? No, without any doubt... Also Mo Zi's theories have not had the success of those of the other Sages. They wound the heart of man, which rejects them... In vain Mo Zi called upon the example of the Great Yu who devoted himself stoically for the good of the empire during the long years he spent in making canals and determining the boundaries of fiefs. His doctrine did not make any more impression on men, who leave the disciples of Mo Zi to dress themselves in skins and coarse cloths, put crude shoes or clogs on their feet, devote themselves with neither rest nor respite to perfect their

suffering for the love of the Great Yu, without any intention of imitating them. - Moreover, if they got no understanding from the others from the outset, the Mo-ists will soon no longer get on with each other. Qin of Xiang Li, Ku Huo, Ji Chi, Deng Lingzi, and others each claim to be the repository of the true ideas of Mo Zi, and they will attack each other. Just like the sophists, they will make dissertations on substance and accidents, resemblance and difference, and on the compatible and incompatible. Their most able disciples will found so many small sects which they hope to make last. Their discussions continue up to the present time. - Summed up, there has been some good in the intentions of Mo Zi and Qin Huali, but they are mistaken in their practical applications. The obligation that they would impose on all to devote and sacrifice themselves to the extreme, would have produced, had there been a response, something superior to vile egoism, but inferior to the natural system (of doing nothing and not intervening). However, honour to Mo Zi. He was the best man of the empire. Although his efforts have remained sterile, his name is not forgotten. This man was a talented scholar.

C. Let us speak of the school of Song Xing and of Yin Wen... To scorn vulgar prejudice, avoid all luxury, offend no one, maintain peace for the people's welfare, possess no more than is necessary, and keep one's heart and mind free; the ancients did and said all these things. Song Xing and Yin Wen made these maxims the basis of a new school, whose disciples wear a special hat in order to be recognized. They would treat all men graciously, whomever they were, considering mutual support as the noblest of moral acts. This conduct, they thought, would have the effect of winning all men and making brothers of them, which was their principal aim. They would accept all outrages. They would try to appease all disputes. They would curse all violence, above all the use of arms. Apostles of pacifism, they went everywhere preaching it, reproving the great and indoctrinating the small. Rebuffed, they would not be discouraged. Put off, they would try again, and they would end up through their persistence by being heard. - In all this, there was some good, no doubt, but also error. These generous men were too forgetful of themselves, through love of their neighbour. As the price of their services, they would accept only their food from those who judged they had deserved it. The result was that the masters of the sect had to fast a great deal more often than not. This did not put off their young disciples, who would rouse themselves to devotion for the common good, saying: 'Is life a thing so precious? Why should I not sacrifice mine, like my master, for the salvation of the world?' Brave people, they criticized no one, did no wrong to anyone, showing contempt only for egoists who were doing nothing for the public good. Not only

did they forbid war, but placing themselves higher, they discovered its cause in the appetites and covetousness, and its remedy in temperance and self-denial. But they stopped there, and were unable by their speculations to raise themselves as far as the Principle (from these just deductions). They were aborted Daoists.

**D.** Let us speak now of the school of Peng Meng, Tian Pian, Shen Dao, and others... Impartiality, altruism, patience, condescension, peace of mind, indifference to science, charity towards all parties; the ancients practised all this. Peng Meng and his disciples made these maxims the basis of their doctrine. They put, as first principle, universal union. 'Each one,' they said, 'has need of others. Heaven covers but does not support; the earth must therefore aid it. The earth supports, but it does not cover; heaven therefore must aid it. No being is sufficient unto itself, and it does not suffice to all. Like heaven and earth, the great doctrine must embrace everything and exclude nothing; an accordance, through mutual accommodation and toleration.' - Shen Dao therefore declared war on all egoism, individualism, and coercion of others. He called for perfect self-denial in relationships. He declared that any science is a useless and dangerous thing. He mocked at the world's esteem of the able, and its infatuation for the Sages. Without theoretically defined principles, he accommodated himself to all and everything. The distinctions of good and evil, of licit and illicit, did not exist for him. He did not admit anyone's advice, took no account of precedent, and pooh-poohed at everything. To act, he waited for an exterior influence to set him in motion; just as the feather waits to fly until the wind lifts it up, just as the mill waits to grind until one makes it turn... Shen Dao was right and wrong. He was right when he condemned science, in so far as it engenders doctrinal obstinacy, a superfluity of opinions, sides and parties. He was wrong, and one is right to laugh at him, when he required men to make no more use of their intelligence than a clod of earth. Pushed to this degree of exaggeration, his system finds itself made more for the dead than for the living. - Tian Pian upheld the same error, having been, like Shen Dao, a disciple of Peng Meng, whom he held as his master. This master was the cause of their believing that the ancients were not elevated higher than the practical negation of the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong; because he omitted to teach them that they repudiated this distinction through having discovered the primordial unity. Now if one is not elevated as far as that unity, it is not possible to take this non-distinction into account. The fact that Peng Meng and like persons deny this distinction without giving proof, puts them in conflict with everyone. Their doctrine was incomplete, defective; they had, however, some idea of the Principle, and approached towards Daoism.



E. Let us speak now of the school of Guan Yin Zi and Lao Zi... Looking for pure causality in the invisible root of sentient beings, and considering these beings as gross products. Considering their multitude as less than their Principle. Dwelling withdrawn into one's spirit in emptiness and solitude. These are the maxims of the ancient science of the Principle. These maxims were propagated by Guan Yin and Lao Dan. As a firm foundation for these maxims, they give the pre-existence of the infinite indeterminate being, the union of all in the great unity. From the principle of the being, from universal union, they deduced that the rules for human conduct should be submission, acquiescence, non-wishing, non-acting, and non-intervention, in order to do no harm. - Guan Yin said: 'All things appear in their truth to him who is not blinded by his own interests. The movements of this man are natural like those of water. The calmness of his heart makes it a mirror in which everything is concentrated. He responds to all happenings, as the echo responds to the sound. He withdraws himself, effaces himself, accommodates himself to all, and wishes nothing for himself. He does not push ahead of others, but keeps to being always the last.' - Lao Dan said: 'Whilst fully conserving your male energy, submit yourself like the female. Make yourself the confluence of the waters. Being perfectly pure, accept seeming not to be so. Put yourself the lowest in the world. When each one desires to be first, wish to be the last, and like the sweeper-up of the empire. When each one desires abundance, prefer indigence and seek after privation and isolation. Do not expend yourself; do not interfere. Laugh at those whom the common people call capable. Count yourself as nothing in merit, but be content to be irreproachable. Be ruled always by the Principle, and respect its laws. Avoid any show of strength or of talent, for the strong are broken and the sharp are blunted by their enemies and those who envy them. Be big and friendly to all. This is the highest teaching.' - O Guan Yin, o Lao Dan, you were the greatest men of all times!

F. Let us speak now of Zhuang Zhi (Zhuang Zi)... The old Daoists drew everything from the obscure and indistinct primitive being, from its alternate mutations, from the two states of life and death, from union with heaven and earth, from the departure of the spirit, from its comings and goings. Zhuang Zi takes up these subjects, and makes them his delights. He speaks of them in his way, in original and bold terms, freely but without causing a schism. Considering that men find abstract lofty explanations difficult to understand, he has recourse to allegories, to comparisons, to the putting on stage of characters, to repetitions of one and the same subject under diverse forms. Neglecting details of lesser importance, he attaches himself above all to the capital point of union of the spirit with the universe. In order not to draw useless discussions

to himself, he neither approves nor disapproves of anyone. Sparkling with wit, his writings do not wound. Full of originality, his remarks are serious and worthy of attention. Everything he says is full of meaning. Two themes above all have his preference, these are, the nature of the author of beings (the Principle), and the identity of life and death (successive phases). He has spoken about the origin with amplitude and elevation. On the genesis of beings and cosmic evolution, his arguments are rich and solid. He sports himself in unfathomable depths.

**G.** Let us speak now of the sophist Hui Shi (Hui Zi)... He was a man with a fertile imagination. He wrote enough to fill five wagons (they wrote on strips of wood). But his principles were false, and his words did not lead towards any goal. He discussed as a rhetorician, supporting or refuting paradoxical propositions of the following kind: The great unity is that which is so great that there is nothing outside it. That which is thinnest is a thousand li thick. Heaven is lower than the earth; the mountains are flatter than the swamps. The noonday sun is the setting sun. A being can be born and die at the same time. The difference between a great and a small similarity, is the small similarity-difference; when beings are entirely similar and different, this is the great similarity-difference. The south without limits is limited. Left for Yue today, I came back from it yesterday. Linked rings are separable. The centre of the world is to the north of Yen (a northern country) and south of Yue (a southern country). Loving all beings, unites with heaven and earth. - Hui Shi was very fond of these discussions which gave him the reputation of an able sophist throughout the empire. Others, imitating him, exercised themselves with the same jousting. Here are some examples of their favourite themes: An egg has feathers. A cock has three legs. Ying contains the empire. A dog can be called a sheep. Horses lay eggs. Toads have tails. Fire is not hot. Mountains have mouths. The wheels of a carriage do not touch the ground. The eye does not see. The pointed finger does not reach its object. The termination is not the end. The tortoise is longer than the snake. The set square, not being square, the compass, not being round, they cannot draw squares or circles. The mortise does not hold the tenon. A flying bird's shadow does not move. The arrow which touches the target no longer advances, and is not stopped. A dog is not a dog. A brown horse and a black cow make three. A white dog is black. An orphan colt has no mother. The length of a foot, should one diminish it by half every day, will never be reduced to zero. - It is on these and like subjects that these sophists discuss throughout their lives, without ever running short of words. Huan Duan and Gongsun Long excelled in making exchanges, sowing doubts, putting the people in a quandary without ever convincing anyone of anything whatsoever, only

enmeshing their patients in the nets of their fallacies, triumphing on seeing that they could not disentangle themselves. Hui Shi used all his time and energy inventing paradoxes more subtle than those of his enemies. That was his glory, and he said willingly that he had no equal. Alas, if he had the upper hand, that did not make him right... One day a malicious southerner called Huang Liao asked him to explain why the sky did not fall, the earth did not cave in, why the wind blew, it rained, thundered etc. Seriously and bravely Hui Shi tried to satisfy this joker. Without a moment's thought he set himself to talking, talking, talking again, without catching his breath, without coming to any end. Contradicting was his happiness, reducing others to silence was his triumph. All the sophists and rhetoricians were afraid of him... Poor man, his strength was only weakness; his way was a narrow path. In its effect, his prodigious activity was only, to the universe, like the buzzing of a mosquito, a useless noise. If he had used his energy to advance towards the Principle, how much more would it have been worth! But Hui Shi was not a man to find peace in serious considerations. He frittered himself away in vain efforts, and was only a verbose rhetorician. He did quite the opposite of what he should have done. He shouted to silence the echo, and ran to catch his shadow. Poor man\*!

\*Compare with chapter 31 C.

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# Subject Index.

(Abbreviations. Lao = Lao Zi. Lie = Lie Zi. Zhu = Zhuang Zi.)

## THE PRINCIPLE.

**Ineffable, unnamable, immutable:** Lao 1 a,5 d,14,21 b,25,32 a,62,70. - Lie 1 f. - Zhu 6 di, 11 f,12 abc,13 ag,25 j. **Non-produced:** Lie 1 abd. **Known by abstraction, not by effort:** Lie 2 a. - Zhu 17 a,22 a f g h i,24 dm. **Author, motor, pivot, fixer of all:** Lao 1 b,4. - Zhu 2 b,6 e,14 a,22 b,23 e f. **Universal norm:** Zhu 2 b,25 b. **Acts without acting:** Zhu 25 j. **Universal mother:** Lao 6. - Lie 1 b. **The sea, image of the Principle:** Zhu 12 l.

## THE VIRTUE OF THE PRINCIPLE.

**Its expansions:** Lie 1 b. - Zhu 12 abc,13 ag,25 j. **Its unwinding:** Lao 14 bc,21 acd,32 b,34 a. **Mystery of the origin:** Lao 1 c. - Zhu 2 d,12 h,22 ek,25 j. **Becoming:** Zhu 14 c. **Matter:** Lie 1 c. **Beings:** Lie 1 bc. **Their real unity:** Zhu 23 e. **Their apparent distinctions:** Lie 1 b,3 abc. **Soot and smoke:** Zhu 23 e. **Man:** Lie 1 go. **Evolution; the chain of transformations; revolutions:** Lie 1 c f g m. - Zhu 6 c e f h,18 bd,21 k,22 ek,23 e,25 j. **The cosmic craft:** Lie 1 e. - Zhu 18 f. **Cosmic periods:** Lie 1 n. **The heaven-earth binome:** Lao 5,79 d. - Zhu 6 f k,13 c,21 d. **Between the two, the bellows:** Lao 5 c. **The yin and the yang, two modes, alternation, the wheel:** Lao 42 a. - Lie 1 ad p,2 bc. - Zhu 6 f,11 a, 14 c,17 a,19 g,21 d,22 b,23 d,25 j,26 a,32 e,33 a. **Transformism:** Lie 1 e,5 c. - Zhu 18 f. **Metempsychosis:** Lie 1 im.

## THE GREAT WHOLE.

**All is one; the cosmos:** Lie 1 b,3 abc. - Zhu 2 b,6 c f,17 a,23 e,25 b j. **Union with the whole:** Lie 2 k,3 b,4 b. - Zhu 1 c,2 a-e,6 c f g j,11 cd,22 c,27 d. **Identity of opposites:** Lao 2 a. - Zhu 2 b c e h,17 a,25 j. **Continuity, cohesion, consonance:** Lie 5 h-q. - Zhu 24 e. **All distinctions unreal:** Lie 1 b,3 abc. **The universe:** Lie 1 n,5 ab. - Zhu 25 j. **Reciprocity between the macrocosm and microcosm:** Lie 2 c. **Of music:** Lie 5 j. - Zhu 14 c.

## NATURE.

**It alone is good and true:** Zhu 8 abcd,9 abc,19 j l,21 g,22 j. **Pure, honest, calm:** Lie 2 d e f. **Unites with the cosmos:** Lie 2 k,3 b,4 b. - Zhu 19 j,20 g,21 j. **...with the elements:** Lie 2 d. **...with water:** Lie 2 h i,8 g. - Zhu 19 i. **...with fire:** Lie 2 k. **...with animals:** Lie 2 g j q. **Natural basis, natural sense:** Zhu 27 ab,31 d. **State of nature:** Lao 3,65,80. - Lie 2 j q. - Zhu 16 a,29 a. **Return to nature:** Zhu 10 bc,23 d,27 d. **Becoming a little child again:** Lao 55. - Zhu 23 c. **Conservation of his pure nature, and knowledge of the Principle make the superior man:** Zhu 19 b,20 f,21 ad.

## ARTIFICIAL, CONVENTIONAL.

**Its becomings:** Lao 18,19,38. - Zhu 9 c,11 b,16 ab,21 be,33 a. **Its fatal consequences:** Zhu 8 abcd,9 abc,10 d,11 a,12 a,13 be,17 a,25 g. **Confucian goodness and fairness:** Lao 18, 19,38. - Zhu 8 bd,9 c,10 b. **Daoism natural, Confucianism artificial:** Zhu 31 bcd,32 f g.

## AGAINST NATURE.

**And pure conventions taste:** Zhu 8 a. **...virtue:** Zhu 8 a. **...art:** Zhu 9 a. **...sciences:** Lao 20 ae. - Zhu 25 h. **...governments:** Zhu 9 b. **...politics:** Lao 27. - Zhu 9 c,10 a,29 b. **...rules of customs:** Zhu 17 a,24 e. **...effort:** Lao 23.

## THE SAGE.

**His way:** Lao 15. - Zhu 15 ab,16 b,19 e,22 e,23 bc,26 h. **His union with the Principle:** Zhu 12 l k,16 b,17 a. **His abstraction, concentration, perfect indifference:** Lao 20 d,34 b, 50,52,56. - Lie 4 e g h n,8 l. - Zhu 1 ac,2 g,3 b,11 d,19 ac d h,20 b,23 c g. **Abstinence of heart:** Zhu 4 ab,6 b g,7 c. **He smiles at all:** Zhu 6 c. **His disdainful disinterestedness, systematic effacement, voluntary obscurity:** Lao 7 ab,8 c,9 c,13,24,28,40,41 bc,42 b,54,61,66,68,71,72, 76,77,78. - Lie 2 n o p,4 k,8 i o p. - Zhu 20 bd,27 f,32 c. **Water his model:** Lao 8 ab,78.

**His simplicity:** Lao 39,40. - Zhu 24a. **His central view, his total science:** Lie 4h. - Zhu 2ch,5e,11c,25bc,32c. **His cold altruism, his total charity:** Lao 5b,49,67,81. - Lie 2q. - Zhu 14b,31c. **...straw dogs:** Lao 5. - Zhu 14d. **His lenience letting go:** Lie 8f. **His independence:** Lao 56. - Zhu 14c,17be,28a-j,29c. **His affable impassivity:** Lao 33. - Zhu 5ad,6b,21ij,26c. **His non-action, letting go:** Lao 10d,43,48,73. - Zhu 7f,11f,12l,13b,25c. **His non-acting government:** Lao 17,29,37,57,63,64. - Zhu 24c. **All efficacy comes from the void:** Lao 11. **...in it is found true happiness:** Lie 1hl. - Zhu 18a. **The Sage abhors war:** Lao 30,31,69. **He hates popularity and avoids common people:** Lie 2m. - Zhu 6b,24j,32a. **His attraction:** Lao 22,35. **His transcendent influence:** Lao 45,47. **He does not impose himself, but leaves all beings free:** Lao 2cd,10g,27c,34a,51c. - Lie 4c. **He never disputes:** Lao 79. - Zhu 7a,20h,22l,26e. **He bends, adapts himself:** Lie 8a. - Zhu 6h,14f,20a,26h. **He does not do violence to his nature:** Lie 7bfg. **He does not wear himself:** Lao 10,12,13,44,52. - Zhu 3abc,15b,19ak,24l. **He recuperates by breathing exercises:** Lao 52b. - Zhu 15a. **Incapacity protects:** Zhu 1f,4d-i,20a.

## PSYCHICAL STATES.

**Moral and mental peace indispensable for reaching the Principle; all passion and emotion makes one incapable:** Lao 1c,20c,55. - Lie 2m. - Zhu 12n,19d. **...repose of water and of the mind:** Zhu 13a. **Death of the heart:** Zhu 21c. **Verb without speech:** Zhu 27a. **Dreams, wanderings of the soul:** Lie 2c. **...real:** Lie 3d. **Ecstatic rapture, and etherealization its preparation:** Lie 2c,3a,4f. - Zhu 1c,2a,6j,7c,17a,21d,24h. **Unconsciousness, protective envelope:** Lie 2d,3f. - Zhu 19b. **Inner sight, made visible to others:** Lie 2l. - Zhu 7e. **Suggestion:** Lie 8z. - Zhu 19g.

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**The self, the personality, the faggot:** Zhu 2j,3c,6ch,21c. **Survival? Soul? Shades? The faggot:** Lao 10ab,33b. - Lie 3b. - Zhu 3c,6d,13a-i,18df,20b,23d,27d. **...repose in death:** Lie 1j,7e. **Life and death, phases:** Lao 16. - Lie 1efik,3b,7bc. - Zhu 2h,6bc,12b,21cd,22a,27d. **Fortune and ill-fortune, phases:** Lao 9,36a. - Lie 4i. - Zhu 21k. **Destiny, fate:** Lie 4a,6a-i,8ejk. - Zhu 6fgk,24j,25i,26a-f,32b.

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**True men:** Zhu 6b,15b. **Transcendent men:** Lie 2b. - Zhu 11e,12c. **...their heavenly palace:** Lie 3a. **...their islands:** Lie 5b. - Zhu 1d. **The superior man:** Lie 2d. - Zhu 1de,2f,6g,7f,13g,23bc. **The Sovereign:** Lao 4e. - Lie 5b. - Zhu 1a,3c,6cdg.

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**Sophists and sophisms:** Lie 2r,4l. - Zhu 17g,25d,33g. **Systems:** Zhu 33. **...of Mo Zi 33b. ...of Song Xing and Yin Wen:** Zhu 33c. **...of Peng Meng, Tian Pian, Shen Dao:** Zhu 33d. **...of Guan Yin Zi and Lao Dan:** Zhu 33e. **...of Zhuang Zi:** Zhu 33f. **...of Hui Zi, sophists,** 33g.

## SINGLE ANECDOTES.

<b>Guo and Xiang, rich and poor:</b> Lie 1p.	<b>Western Sages:</b> Lie 4c.
<b>Steal from nature, steal from others:</b> Lie 1p.	<b>Giant turtles:</b> Lie 5b.
<b>The fighting cock:</b> Lie 2q.	<b>Heart-swap:</b> Lie 5i.
<b>Language of the animals:</b> Lie 2q.	<b>The magic sword:</b> Lie 5p.
<b>The rich man and his valet:</b> Lie 3d.	<b>Emperor Mu's marionettes:</b> Lie 5m.
<b>Roebuck killed in a dream:</b> Lie 3e.	<b>Archery:</b> Lie 5n,8b,2e. Zhu 21i.
<b>Universal folly:</b> Lie 3g.	<b>Asbestos:</b> Lie 5q.
<b>Imagination and suggestion:</b> Lie 3h.	<b>The three doctors:</b> Lie 6e.

## Subject Index.

- The scrupulous:** Lie 8 q.  
**Recipe against death:** Lie 8 w.  
**Autosuggestion:** Lie 8 z.  
**The gourds:** Zhu 1 e.  
**The cream:** Zhu 1 e.  
**The useless tree:** Zhu 1 f, 4 def.  
**Twilight and Shadow:** Zhu 2 i, 27 e.  
**The butterfly:** Zhu 2 j.  
**Chaos operated on:** Zhu 7 g.  
**The black pearl:** Zhu 12 d.  
**The crushed pearl:** Zhu 32 h.  
**Counterbalanced ladle:** Zhu 12 k, 14 d.  
**Books, detritus of the ancients:** Zhu 13 i.  
**The Yellow Emperor's symphony:** Zhu 14 c.  
**The autumn flood:** Zhu 17 a.  
**The frog of the well:** Zhu 17 d.  
**Children of Han Dan:** Zhu 17 d.  
**The pleasure of fish:** Zhu 17 g.  
**Turtle:** Zhu 17 d.  
**Sacrificed turtle:** Zhu 17 e.  
**Sacrificial cattle:** Zhu 32 i.  
**Confucius surrounded:** Zhu 17 c, 20 dg, 28 h.  
**The sea-bird:** Zhu 18 e.  
**Sacrificial pigs:** Zhu 19 f.  
**Spectres:** Zhu 19 g.  
**Soot and smoke:** Zhu 23 e.  
**Monkey Island:** Zhu 24 g.  
**Violated corpse:** Zhu 26 d.  
**Clairvoyant turtle:** Zhu 26 f.

## REPEATED ANECDOTES.

- The skull:** Lie 1 e. Zhu 18 df.  
**Archery:** Lie 2 e. Zhu 21 i.  
**The Shang Rapid:** Lie 2 h. Zhu 19 d.  
**The Lu Liang Falls:** Lie 2 i, 8 g. Zhu 19 i.  
**Hunting grasshoppers:** Lie 2 j. Zhu 19 c.  
**The seer duped:** Lie 2 l. Zhu 7 e.  
**The beauty and the ugly:** Lie 2 o. Zhu 20 i.  
**The monkey rearer:** Lie 2 q. Zhu 2 c.  
**The fighting cock:** Lie 2 q. Zhu 19 h.  
**Guan Zhong dying:** Lie 6 c. Zhu 24 f.  
**Gift of grain for Lie Zi:** Lie 8 d. Zhu 28 d.  
**Meeting of Lao Dan and Yang Zhu:** Lie 2 n. Zhu 27 f.  
**Lie Zi becomes popular:** Lie 2 m. Zhu 32 a.  
**Transformism:** Lie 1 e. Zhu 18 f.

# Index of names.

(Key: Pinyin, Wade-Giles, (Wiegner's EFEO), equivalent, or alternative, names).

- A HE GAN, Ah Ho-kan, (A-ho-kan): Zhu 22 g.  
 BAI FENG ZI, Pai-feng Tzu, (Pai-fong-tzeu): Lie 4 j.  
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