

1. When the people fear no power,
Then great power has indeed arrived.
Do not disturb them in their dwellings,
Do not weary them in their living.
It is because you do not weary (*pu yen*) them,
That they are not wearied of you.

2. Therefore the sage knows himself (*tzu chih*),
But does not see himself (*tzu chien*).
He loves himself (*tzu ai*),
But does not exalt himself (*tzu kuei*).
Therefore he leaves that and takes this.

General Comment

Ho-shang Kung entitles this chapter "On Loving Oneself" (*ai chi*). True self-love in the case of the ruler means respecting the integrity of the people.

Detailed Comment

1. The greatest power does not oppress (Ch. 40.1). The best government is hardly noticed by its people (ch. 17.1). A government that intrudes upon the lives of the people, disturbing their habitats and destroying their livelihoods, invites their weariness (*yen*) and rebellion. A government that imitates nature inspires respect and compliance in the same way nature's laws are respected and obeyed. Such a government is not feared, yet its authority is unchallenged. This is the mark of great power.

The second character in line three has *hsia* 狎, to abuse, in the Wang Pi text. The Ho-shang Kung and other texts have *hsia* 狹, narrow. In the Ma-wang Tui texts, version A has *cha* 闕 and version B has *chia* 佻, both closer to the Wang Pi version. *Hsia* is the way a predator treats its prey. A patron of a whorehouse is called a *hsia ke*. Here it describes how a ruthless ruler enters a person's house to search and abuse its residents.

2. The enlightened ruler is as self-effacing as Tao. To see oneself is to stand apart from others (chs. 22.2 and 33.1), an act of pride and alienation.

73

1. One who is courageous out of daring (*kan*) is killed.
 One who is courageous out of not daring lives.
 Of these two, this is beneficial while that is harmful.
 What heaven hates, who knows the reason?
 Therefore even the sage takes it to be difficult.

2. The way of heaven:
 Without contending (*cheng*), it is yet good at winning,
 Without speaking, it is yet good in responding,
 Without being beckoned, it yet comes of its own accord,
 Unhurried, it is yet good at planning (*mou*).
 The net of heaven is vast,
 Widely spaced, yet missing nothing.

General Comment

This chapter shows great religious fervor. It marvels at the inscrutable ways of heaven, then ends with a declaration of faith in heaven's wonderful ways.

This chapter shares its central theme—that heaven helps one who fights courageously out of not daring—with chapter 67, which says that only one who loves (*tz'u*) like a parent is capable of courage and that only such courage leads to survival, and chapter 69, which says that in a war only he who is sorrowful wins. As such this is another chapter on military art, or on how to fight with heaven on one's side.

Detailed Comment

1. In believing that heaven saves those who are courageous not out of daring (*kan*), but out of not daring, the *Tao Te Ching's* position contrasts with that of Hegel who says:

And it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; only thus is it tried and proved that the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence, is not the merely immediate form in which it at first make its appearance, is not its mere absorption in the expanse of life. . . . Through death, doubtless, there has arisen the certainty that both did stake their life, and held it lightly both in their own case and in the case of the other. . . .

(1955: 233)

For Hegel the willingness to stake life and hold it lightly is an act of freedom by which self-consciousness proves its independence from life. From the Taoist viewpoint, to be courageous with daring (*kan*), an act of *hubris*, invites the hatred of heaven. Only that courage born of a holy reverence for and a humble submission to heaven as the source of life wins heaven's benediction (ch. 67.4 and 64.5). Chapter 30.3 tells us that *kuo*, the determination to fight in the face of death, is a courage that saves life, while *kan*, the daring of the strong who hold life lightly, is a courage that courts death. The courage of a Taoist is courage for nature and life, while the courage admired by Hegel and Socrates, who defined philosophy as the practice of death (*Phaedo*, 64), is the courage of thought in defiance of nature and life.

The last line does not appear in the Tang dynasty stone inscription (Kao Heng: 142), nor in the recently unearthed Ma-wang Tui texts. Both Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung, however, have commented on it.

2. Wang Pi, Ho-shang Kung, and others have interpreted lines 2–5 as how things respond to heaven; thus, heaven does not contend and yet everything

proclaims its victory; heaven does not speak and yet all things respond to it; heaven does not beckon yet all things return to it on their own; heaven is unhurried, yet all affairs are well planned. I hold that these lines are not meant to describe how creatures respond to heaven, but to declare the providence of heaven on earth. In a most mysterious way heaven, without contending, speaking, being beckoned, or hurrying—which are human ways—wins, responds, arrives, and plans all in the most perfect manner. By these lines the Taoist declares his profound admiration and total trust in heaven. Heaven oversees all, thus all is well.

74

1. The people do not fear death,
 Why threaten them with death?
 Suppose the people always fear death,
 One who does strange things (*ch'ï*),
 I shall seize and kill,
 Then who dares [to do strange things]?

2. Killing is carried out by the executioner.
 To replace the executioner and kill,
 Is like chopping wood in place of the master carpenter.
 To chop wood in place of the master carpenter,
 Rarely one does not hurt one's own hand.

General Comment

This chapter is against tyranny in government. As in the preceding chapter, it declares that ultimate power over life and death rests with heaven.

Detailed Comment

1. There are two reasons why people do not fear death. One is the development of consciousness leading to an awareness of values deemed higher than life; thus,

to realize these values people are willing to repudiate their lives. Some examples: Confucius's saying "A resolute person and a person of humanity (*jen*) will never seek to prolong life by injuring humanity, but would rather sacrifice life to fulfill humanity" (*Analects* 15: 8); Hegel's statement quoted in the preceding chapter that self-consciousness in affirming its freedom is willing to stake its life; and Patrick Henry's famous dictum "give me liberty, or give me death." To the Taoist these statements are wrong. There are no values higher than life. Since knowledge gives people the false sense that there are values higher than life, rulers must not mislead their people onto the path of knowledge. In the ideal Taoist state both ruler and people have forsaken the path of knowledge for the simplicity of nature. Such people love life and fear death.

A second reason why people do not fear death, stated here, is a government so tyrannical that the people can no longer live in peace. To the extent that they can no longer love life, they no longer fear death. We shall see in the next chapter that to those who look upon life as no better than death the death penalty is ineffective as a deterrent. A well-informed and efficient government always mobilizing its people produces disgruntled citizens, while a dull government making no demands on the people produces contented citizens (ch. 58). Knowledge is thus again the root cause of unrest in both government and people. When the ruler models his government on nature, disturbing the people neither in their dwellings nor livelihood (ch. 72), they will love life and fear death.

The structure of the last four lines here parallels the last two lines of chapter 3.2. Chapter 3 says that if the ruler keeps the people in the simplicity of nature, those individuals who wander in the path of knowledge will not dare to cause trouble. In this chapter the same message is put forth in much stronger terms. If the people love life and fear death, the ruler can then make execution the law of the land for those who do strange (*ch'i*) things. The conviction, of course, is that when people love life and fear death no one would want to do strange things.

2. What needs to be cultivated in both ruler and people alike is the sense of not daring, which preserves life. When the people fear death, and when the ruler dares not kill, government reaches its optimal condition. The power to kill is vested in heaven alone. A ruler who commits transgressions against the prerogative of heaven invites harm upon himself.

A passage in the *Hsi-tzu* (I, 11) speaks of one worthy to partake of heaven's secret in divination as someone "who in ancient times was wise, deeply aware, spiritual, martial and yet who did not kill (*erh pu sha che fu*)." (R. Wilhelm had neglected to translate these last five important characters. 1950: 317).