

Chapter 10

Original Text

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Translation

Carry the hun and po, and embrace the One—can you keep them from parting?

Concentrate your qi to utmost softness—can you be like an infant?

Wash away and clear the mysterious seeing—can you be without blemish?

Loving the people and governing the state—can you do it by nonaction?

The gate of Heaven opens and closes—can you keep to the feminine (soft)?

Be bright and reach in all directions—can you be without “knowing”?

Give them life and nourish them; give life yet do not possess, act yet do not rely, lead yet do not lord it—this is called mysterious De.

Word Notes

- ☐ — “**hun (spiritual soul)**”: the animating, subtle spirit.
- ☐ — “**po (corporeal soul)**”: the bodily essence.
- ☐☐ — “**embrace the One**”: hold to the unitary center.
- ☐☐ — “**concentrate qi**”: focus the breath/energy.
- ☐☐ — “**utmost softness**”: extreme suppleness and yielding.
- ☐ — “**wash away**”: cleanse.
- ☐☐ — “**mysterious seeing**”: deep, far-reaching vision/inspection.
- ☐ — “**blemish**”: flaw, defect.
- ☐☐ — “**gate of Heaven**”: the heart, which can connect to Heaven.
- ☐ — “**feminine**”: soft/yielding stance.
- ☐☐ — “**reach in four directions**”: clear and unimpeded on all sides.
- ☐ — “**to nourish**”: to rear, to sustain.
- ☐ — “**to lord it / control**”: to dominate or impose.

Chapter Explanation

When the mind runs outward, the **hun** and **po** part company. To **carry the hun, keep the po, and embrace the One**—can you keep them from separating?

If the qi is let loose, the heart is stirred. To **concentrate the pre-celestial qi** so that it is **supremely soft**, can you be like the **infant’s Great Harmony**?

To **wash away the dust** so that your **mysterious seeing** opens wide—can you be **without blemish**?

Once the body is cultivated, then in **loving the people and governing the state**, can you manage it by **nonaction**?

The **gate of Heaven** can open and close with transformations beyond counting; can you remain in the **feminine/soft**?

In handling affairs, to be **clear and unobstructed on all sides**—can you be **as if without knowing**?

To **give life** to the people and **nourish** the people; to give life yet **not make it your possession**; to act yet **not rely on it**; to stand as their **leader** yet **not lord it over them**—this is what is called **mysterious De**, deep and hard to name.

Discourse

The opening four lines of this chapter are precisely Mencius’s teaching on **nourishing qi** and **not letting the heart be moved**—only Laozi does not say “heart,” but says **ying** (☐), which he interprets as **hun**. *Hun* is the heart’s spirit—hence the sense of “ceaselessly active.” *Li* is the post-

celestial heart; the **infant** does not lose the **pre-celestial qi**. If one can refrain from using the post-celestial heart and not lose the pre-celestial qi, then one can **wash away the dust, open one's vision**, survey up and down, past and present, penetrate mystery and attend to the subtle, without clinging to a single bias.

Thus one is **neither** like those who are unopened and cramped, with “bean-sized” eyesight, drowning in old learning, **nor** like those fettered by materiality, who take only what is seen to exist and what is unseen to be nothing. Therefore one can **love the people and govern the state**, transforming without limit in response to the ten thousand affairs; one is **clear and unimpeded** and not bound by fixed preconceptions.

To **give life and nourish** the world without taking it as one's own; to **do** without leaning on one's doing; to be the **leader** of the people yet not rule them by domination or bind them with laws and penalties—letting the people naturally **wander at ease within Dao and De**—this ineffable **mysterious De** is found, in our land, only in **Yao** and **Shun**, who made the world “common to all”; and, in the West, in **Washington**, who founded a union of states—each worthy of the name without shame.

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