

# Chapter 10

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## Translation

Carry the soul, embrace the One —  
can you keep them from parting?  
Concentrate the breath to utmost softness —  
can you be as an infant?  
Cleanse the mysterious vision —  
can you leave it without flaw?  
Love the people, govern the state —  
can you act through nonaction?  
The gates of Heaven open and close —  
can you abide as the feminine?  
Bright understanding reaches every direction —  
can you appear as though unknowing?

It gives them life and nourishes them.  
It gives life yet claims no possession,  
acts yet takes no credit,  
guides yet does not rule.  
This is called the mysterious De.

## Word Notes

- 魂 — "**soul**": The hun, the spirit-soul. JXZ glosses 魂 as 魂 (hun), the spiritual aspect of the soul.
- 魄 — "**spirit**": The po, the corporeal spirit. Together with 魂 (hun), they form the dual soul.
- 洗 — "**cleanse**": To wash, to purge.
- 觀 — "**gaze**": To look, to observe. Here: the inner contemplative gaze.

- 心 — "**flaw**": Blemish, defect.
- 心 — "**the gates of Heaven**": The heart. JXZ glosses: "The heart can connect to Heaven."
- 心 — "**nurture**": To nourish, to sustain.
- 心 — "**control**": To govern, to rule over.

## Chapter Explanation

When the heart races outward, the hun and po separate. To **carry the soul, guard the spirit, and embrace the One** — can one keep them from parting? When one's breath becomes violent, the heart grows agitated. To **concentrate the pre-celestial breath and bring it to utmost softness** — can one be like the Supreme Harmony of an infant? To **cleanse away dust and grime, and open wide the inner gaze to penetrate the mysterious** — can one be free of all blemish? Once the self is cultivated, then to **love the people and govern the state** — can one do so through the clear stillness of nonaction? **The gates of Heaven can open and can close**, their transformations without limit — can one abide as the soft and receptive? To be **bright in understanding, reaching in all four directions** — can one appear as though unknowing? **It gives life** to the people of all under Heaven. **It nurtures** the people of all under Heaven. Yet having given them life, **it does not take possession**. Having acted on behalf of all under Heaven, **it does not presume upon its merit**. Having become **the leader** of all under Heaven, **it does not control**. This is the deep and far-reaching mysterious De, beyond all naming.

## Discourse

The opening four lines of this chapter are precisely the teaching of Mencius on nourishing qi and achieving an unmoved heart. Yet instead of saying "heart," the text says 心. JXZ glosses 心 as "hun" — the spirit of the heart — and in this there is already the sense of "restlessly stirring without cease." "Parting" refers to the post-celestial heart. The infant has not lost the pre-celestial breath and is able to refrain from using the post-celestial heart. By not losing the pre-celestial breath, one can then cleanse away the dust and grime, open wide the inner gaze, and observe all things above and below, ancient and modern — penetrating the mysterious, entering the subtle, without being confined to one partiality. One is not like the narrow-minded who see no further than a bean, drowning in old learning. Nor is one like those confined to the material, taking what they can see as real and what they cannot see as nonexistent. Therefore one can love the people and govern the state, with transformations without limit, responding to the myriad affairs. One's bright understanding reaches in every direction, without being confined to fixed opinions. One gives life to all under Heaven and nourishes them, without taking it as one's own possession or one's own achievement. One serves as leader of all under Heaven yet does not presume on authority to act imperiously. Moreover, one does not use laws and regulations to bind the people, but lets them naturally roam at ease within the realm of Dao and De. Such is the mysterious De — beyond all power of praise. In our nation, only Yao and Shun, who held the empire as a public trust, and in the West, only George Washington, who founded the United States, can be said to stand worthy of it without shame.

