

Chapter 24



Translation

Stand on tiptoe — you cannot hold your ground.
Stride too wide — you cannot walk.
Display yourself — you will not be luminous.
Insist you are right — you will not be distinguished.
Boast of your deeds — you will claim no merit.
Flaunt your strengths — you will not endure.

From the vantage of Dao, these are
leftover food and excess baggage —
even creatures find them loathsome.
Therefore one who has Dao does not dwell there.

Word Notes

- 踮 — "**stand on tiptoe**": To raise oneself on the toes.
- 跨 — "**stride too wide**": To lift the legs in an exaggerated step.
- 多 — "**excess**": Superfluous, redundant.

Chapter Explanation

One who **stands on tiptoe** hoping to appear tall **cannot hold his ground**. One who **strides too wide** hoping to go far **cannot walk**. One who **displays himself** cannot be truly **luminous**. One who **insists he is right** cannot be truly **distinguished**. One who **boasts of his deeds** will have **no merit**. One who **flaunts his strengths** will **not endure**. Spoken in terms of Dao, these are called **craving too much food and craving too great a journey** — eating to excess and traveling to exhaustion. **Even creatures** find such behavior loathsome. Therefore **one who has Dao** does not do these things.

Discourse

This chapter continues to develop the meaning of non-contention from the two preceding chapters. It further warns emphatically against the great harm of overreaching and rushing ahead — that even creatures find such behavior loathsome. If a person insists on contending recklessly, he falls

below even the level of creatures.

Yet Laozi's principle of non-contention is not the doctrine of spineless, shameless resignation. This has already been distinguished and clarified multiple times in earlier chapters. There is no need to say more here.

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