

Chapter 26



Translation

The heavy is the root of the light;
the still is the master of the restless.

Thus the Sage travels all day
yet never strays from his supply wagon.
Though splendid vistas rise before him,
he rests at ease, transcendent and unmoved.

How then can the lord of ten thousand chariots
treat his own person lightly before all under Heaven?
To be light is to lose the root;
to be restless is to lose the master.

Word Notes

- ☐ — "**restless, agitated**": Impetuousness, fidgeting haste.
- ☐ — "**a covered wagon for resting in**": A vehicle in which one sleeps and rests during travel.
- ☐ — "**baggage, provisions**": The supplies and stores loaded on the wagon.
- ☐ — "**at ease, composed**": Settled, peaceful.

Chapter Explanation

In all things, **the heavy is the root of the light**: what has weight serves as the foundation for what is light. **The still is the master of the restless**: what can be quiet commands what is agitated. Thus **the Sage travels from morning to evening, all day long, and never parts from the wagon bearing his provisions**. Even when the most magnificent and splendid sights appear before him, he sits steadily upon his wagon, **transcendent and unmoved**. How is it, then, that **the lord of ten thousand chariots** — the king of a state fielding ten thousand war-chariots — takes his own person lightly, rushing off to chase the world's splendors? He does not realize that **lightness loses the root** and **restlessness loses the master**.

Discourse

The great earth is heavy; all the light myriad beings grow upon its surface, and it is the root of all. The sea is still; all the restless hundred rivers flow into it, and it is the master of all waters. A person who is light and frivolous cannot bear responsibility. A person who is restless and agitated cannot endure for long. Only one who is grave and composed can bear heavy burdens and reach far destinations. Therefore the Sage travels all day without clinging to stillness for its own sake — he moves through the world, yet never strays from his supply wagon, never daring to treat himself lightly. Though he be honored as the Son of Heaven, possessing all within the four seas, enjoying the utmost splendor the human world can offer — he not only regards these things as what he has always had; he looks upon them as one would a worn-out shoe. Transcendent, dwelling beyond the world, his heart utterly unmoved, he is not drawn along by outward splendor. How then is it that those of the utmost nobility — lords of ten thousand chariots, the proverbial "sons of a family worth a thousand in gold" — if we take this to mean only the sovereign of a great state, then must everyone apart from the sovereign not cherish their person? They lightly cast aside their person, abandoning themselves to passions and desires, soaring and fluttering in agitation, until they lose the root and lose the master. How truly lamentable.

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