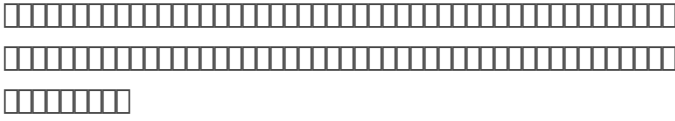


Chapter 27



Translation

One skilled in traveling leaves no ruts or tracks;
one skilled in speaking leaves no flaw to censure;
one skilled in reckoning uses no tallies or counters;
one skilled in closing uses no bolt or lock, yet what is closed cannot be opened;
one skilled in binding uses no cord or knot, yet what is bound cannot be undone.

Thus the Sage is ever skilled at rescuing people,
and so no person is cast aside;
ever skilled at rescuing things,
and so no thing is cast aside.
This is called making insight manifest.

Therefore the good person is the teacher of the not-good,
and the not-good person is the resource of the good.
Not to value one's teacher,
not to cherish one's resource —
however clever one may be, this is great delusion.
This is called the essential mystery.

Word Notes

- □ — "**ruts**": Wheel-ruts left by a carriage.
- □ — "**flaw**": A defect, an imperfection.
- □ — "**to censure**": To count up another's faults.
- □ — "**tallies**": Counting sticks, an abacus.
- □ — "**counters**": Counting rods used for calculation.
- □ — "**bolt**": The horizontal crossbar used to bar a door.
- □ — "**lock**": A lock or latch.
- □ — "**knot, to bind**": To tie up with a cord.
- □ — "**to make manifest**": To display outwardly. JXZ's reading; standard interpretations render this as "concealing" or "inheriting."

Chapter Explanation

One skilled in traveling leaves no ruts or tracks. **One skilled in speaking** has no flaw that can be pointed out or censured. **One skilled in reckoning** needs no abacus or counting rods to calculate. **One skilled in closing** uses no bolt or lock, yet what is closed cannot be opened. **One skilled in binding** uses no cord to tie a knot, yet what is bound cannot be undone. Thus **the Sage is ever skilled at rescuing people**, and so **no person is cast aside**. He is **ever skilled at rescuing things**, and so **no thing is cast aside**. This is called **making one's own insight manifest**. Therefore **the good person is the teacher of the not-good person; the not-good person is the resource of the good person**. If the good person does not value his standing as teacher, and does not cherish those who may serve as his resource — even if he is very clever, he is in fact profoundly deluded. This is the most essential and marvelous secret.

Discourse

Mencius said: "Those who accord with the center nurture those who do not; those who have ability nurture those who lack it. If those who accord with the center were to cast away those who do not, and those with ability were to cast away those without, then the distance between worthy and unworthy would not amount to even an inch." The Buddhist scriptures say: "The Buddha ferries all beings across; all beings ferry the Buddha across." Western philosophers say: "Heroes create the times; the times create heroes." All of these illuminate the central meaning of this chapter and corroborate one another. One can see that the sages of all ages and all lands, without exception, are rescuers of people and things. Without exception, they bring all the people and things of the world to completion. And in doing so, they themselves attain great accomplishment. Therefore it is inevitable that one must borrow the people and things of the world in order to bring oneself to completion. Suppose Mencius had not encountered an age when human hearts ran wild and perverse doctrines ran rampant — he could not have become the Second Sage who championed orthodoxy and refuted heterodoxy. Suppose Shakyamuni had not encountered an age when human hearts were confused, when licentiousness, killing, greed, and violence raged — he could not have become the Buddha, the teacher of gods and humans. Suppose Washington had not encountered an age of despotic cruelty — he could not have become the foremost great man who created the United States. It is precisely because the world is in chaos and human hearts have gone bad that the perfect raw material for accomplishment is present. When the raw material appears, the person with keen eyes and quick hands seizes it first. Opportunity must never be lost. Alas! Today the entire globe is engulfed in slaughter, ruined beyond repair, in a manner unprecedented since antiquity. The world truly has reached the utmost extreme of chaos. Treacherous schemes and deceitful plots are ruthlessly inflicted upon even one's closest kin and dearest friends. Greed, violence, and cruelty treat people worse than animals. This too is unprecedented since antiquity. Human hearts truly have reached the utmost extreme of corruption. Since the corruption of the times and of human hearts is without precedent since antiquity, it follows that the raw material for accomplishing great heroes and great sages has also reached an unprecedented richness, and the circumstances for accomplishing great heroes and great sages have also reached an unprecedented ripeness. The great heroes and great sages who will emerge in the future to save the world must likewise be without precedent. And the people who assist those great heroes and great sages in saving the world will similarly be without precedent. The American President Wilson, along with England, France, and other nations, at the conclusion of the European War, established the League of Nations for Perpetual Peace to maintain lasting peace. If they can truly persevere

from start to finish and hold firm to the end, they too may truly be called great sages and great heroes without precedent since antiquity. Laozi calls those who rescue people and things "good persons." I go further and honor them with the title "beautiful persons." Confucius praised the music of Shun as "perfectly beautiful and perfectly good." A beautiful person ranks higher than a good person. Laozi says: "The good person is the teacher of the not-good." I say: "The beautiful person is the teacher of the not-beautiful; the not-beautiful person is the resource of the beautiful person." The *Book of Odes* says: "Of whom do I think? The beautiful one in the west. That beautiful one — the one of the west!" I chant this verse three times, and cannot help but send my prayers and blessings toward the west.

Now, everyone under Heaven who has the slightest human feeling wants to rescue people and things. Yet countless people who wish to rescue people and things find themselves unable to rescue anyone or anything. Why is this? It is because they are not skilled at rescuing people, not skilled at rescuing things. Laozi says: **"The Sage is ever skilled at rescuing people, and so no person is cast aside; ever skilled at rescuing things, and so no thing is cast aside."** Those who are skilled at rescuing people and things leave no visible trace. They rescue people through Dao, not through wealth. They rescue people through humaneness, not through petty kindness. They cause all the people under Heaven — men to find their proper occupations, women to find their proper homes. Each person is settled in their own livelihood. Even the old, the young, the disabled, and the infirm can support themselves through some skill. Even the most obstinate and intractable can be gently guided and persuaded until they return to the proper path. Naturally, no one is useless or worthy of being cast aside. As for rescuing things — likewise, each thing is given its proper use. Even the most poisonous and filthy things have their uses and are not to be discarded. Only then can all species dwell together without contention, and all things grow together without harming one another. As for philanthropists who give out clothing and meals — the merit they accumulate is certainly great. But those who receive such aid often develop a habit of dependence. As for buying captive animals and releasing them — this too has great merit, but it reaches very few. I do not say these things are bad; I say only that they cannot save all under Heaven. Confucius said: "The good person does not follow in others' footsteps, yet neither does he enter the inner chamber." How then can such a person rescue all the people and things under Heaven? Consider: throughout his entire life, Confucius never engaged in any charitable enterprise. He merely edited the *Odes*, established the *Rites*, and bequeathed teachings and set down laws. Naturally he was able to fulfill the nature of all people and things. Fulfilling the nature of all people and things — causing all people and all the myriad beings to find their proper place — that is what it means to be truly skilled at rescuing people and things. These two statements of Laozi's are truly of the most profound mystery. All great educators who enlighten the people's wisdom and nurture the people's virtue; all great industrialists who benefit the people's livelihood and enrich the people's welfare — all are contained within these words. The vulgar and undiscerning say that the learning of Laozi is quietistic nonaction, purely negative, a parasite upon the world. But consider carefully: the words of this chapter contain a great and active purpose. They go so far as to directly reproach those who merely keep themselves clean and pure, who embrace a philosophy of world-weariness, calling them "greatly deluded." Is the learning of Laozi really negativism? It is simply that Laozi's mode of action is nonaction that leaves nothing undone. Though ten thousand affairs swirl about him, he remains clear and still within himself. He grasps the essential principle, follows the natural momentum of circumstances, and acts without forcing, without artifice — that is all.

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