

One who **holds De in abundance** is compared to a newborn infant. Because the infant does not know how to harm things, its abundant De resonates and summons a response: **venomous insects do not sting** it, **fierce beasts do not seize** it, **birds that snatch their prey do not strike** it. Though its **bones are weak and sinews soft**, its vital force grips and holds with great firmness. It knows nothing of the **union of male and female**, yet **true yang stirs of itself**. This shows that its **true essence has reached the utmost purity**. It **cries all day**, yet its voice never grows hoarse or strained. Its **harmony has reached the utmost**.

One who understands harmony is said to **know the constant Dao**. One who knows the constant Dao is said to have attained **the utmost clarity**. Nourishing oneself through Supreme Harmony, augmenting the vital force, is called **auspicious**. When the heart does not let the temperamental qi disturb it, and can lead the qi so that it does not become violent and unruly, this is called **true strength**.

In this way, preserving Supreme Harmony augments the vital force, and the heart leading the qi so that it does not leak outward constitutes strength — only then does one accord with Dao. Like the myriad beings whose vital qi bursts forth: they may indeed grow strong and vigorous, but **when beings reach their prime, they age**. This is called **departing from Dao**. **What departs from Dao comes to an early end**.

Discourse

The preceding chapter spoke of establishing De throughout all under Heaven. The root-source of this lies in cultivating the self. This cultivation of the self requires no exotic methods or extraordinary arts — one need only not lose the heart of the newborn infant. The infant's heart is harmonious, its qi is soft — this is the image of abundant De. Its harmonious qi resonates and summons: dragons descend, tigers submit.

Moreover, the infant is without selfishness and without desire. Its primal qi does not leak outward. Therefore it can generate life ceaselessly. Whenever beings allow their vital qi to burst forth and spill outward, they may indeed flourish and thrive. But when the fullness reaches its extreme, decline inevitably follows. Decline leads to old age and death.

Only the pine and cypress do not flourish greatly in spring, and therefore they do not wither in the cold of winter. If even plants and trees are so, how much more should this be true of human beings?

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