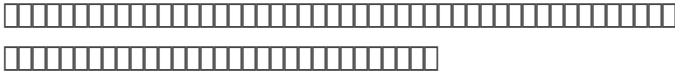


Chapter 59



Translation

For governing people and serving Heaven,
nothing surpasses drawing inward.
Only through drawing inward
can one submit early.
Submitting early — this is called
accumulating De, layer upon layer.

With De accumulated, layer upon layer,
nothing lies beyond one's power.
When nothing lies beyond one's power,
no one can know one's limit.
When no one can know one's limit,
one may hold the state.

Holding the mother of the state,
one may long endure.
This is called deepening the roots, firming the base —
the Dao of long life and enduring vision.

Word Notes

- 引 — "**frugality**": drawing inward, withdrawing, emptying, stilling. Not mere parsimony — the entire Daoist posture of self-restraint.
- 本 — "**base**": the root; the foundation.

Chapter Explanation

Governing people and **serving Heaven** — nothing surpasses drawing inward, withdrawing, emptying, and stilling. Only one who draws inward and stills the self can be said to have **submitted early** to the way of serving Heaven and governing people. One who has long practiced this way is said to have **accumulated De, layer upon layer**. With De accumulated, layer upon layer, **nothing lies beyond one's power**. When nothing lies beyond one's power, **no one can know one's limit**. When no one can know one's limit, **one may hold the state**. Having secured

the mother of the state, one may long endure. This frugality of drawing inward, if applied to self-cultivation, is called **deepening the roots and firming the base** — the Dao of long life and enduring vision.

Discourse

This chapter treats governing people and serving Heaven as equally important. This is precisely the spirit of the Two Emperors and Three Kings — Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, and Kings Wen and Wu — the sages who were scrupulous in the affairs of the people and reverent before the mandate of Heaven.

If we examine the ancient scriptures and classics, the matters of governing people and serving Heaven are all set forth in the fullest detail. From this it is clear that serving Heaven is no vague and ethereal affair. Yet the sages' way of serving Heaven was nothing like the manner of the rulers of the Qin, Han, Tang, and Song dynasties, with their feng-shan sacrifices and apotropaic rites, their fawning irreverence and superstitious practices. It was, rather, a matter of having few private desires and little selfishness, of utmost sincerity penetrating and moving Heaven, resonating with the heart of Heaven itself. Then naturally yin and yang would be in harmony, the seasons would follow their proper course, and there would be no calamities of flood, drought, or pestilence, no people given to debauchery, wickedness, extravagance, or excess.

For human beings dwell within qi as fish dwell within water. When the water grows turbid, the fish are unsettled. When qi departs from its proper state, it gives rise to disorder among people. The Sage serves Heaven through sincerity, starting from the very transformation of qi — this is the marvelous method of rectifying the root and purifying the source.

Moreover, since all beings are born of Heaven, being scrupulous in human affairs is itself reverence toward Heaven. Governing people and serving Heaven are originally one and the same undertaking. One who can govern people can serve Heaven; one who can serve Heaven can naturally govern people. Among the rulers of ancient times who truly governed all under Heaven, which of them was not one who could stand unashamed even in the hidden corner of the room?

As for the way of governing people and serving Heaven: the Confucian disciple Zhonggong exemplified it when he dwelt in reverence and acted with simplicity. In this he grasped the essentials. He could face south, governing through nonaction, and attain lasting stability. If one applies this way to cultivating the self and establishing one's destiny, one can likewise attain long life and enduring vision. For governing the state and cultivating the self are, after all, one and the same principle.

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