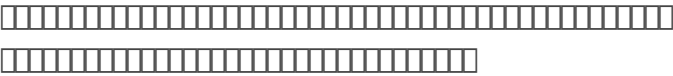


Chapter 65



Translation

Those in ancient times who were skilled in practicing the Dao did not use it to sharpen the people's minds, but to return them to simplicity. The people are difficult to govern because their cleverness runs too deep. To govern a state through cleverness is to become the state's undoing. To govern a state without cleverness is the state's blessing. To know these two is to know the standard. Always to know the standard — this is called mysterious De. Mysterious De is deep and far-reaching, running counter to the current of worldly things, until at last it arrives at the Great Accord.

Word Notes

- 法 — "**standard**": Model, exemplar, pattern.

Chapter Explanation

Those in ancient times who were **skilled in governing through Dao** did not first open the people's intellect — they sought to **lead the people back to simplicity**. The reason the people are **difficult to govern** is that their cunning and scheming have grown too great. Therefore, **governing a state through cunning and deceit** is to be a **thief** to that state. **Not governing through cunning and deceit** is the state's **blessing**. To understand the advantages and disadvantages of **these two approaches** is to possess a standard for governance. To be able to know **this standard** is what we call **mysterious De**. Mysterious De is **deep and far-reaching** — it runs **counter to worldly conventions and common sentiments**. Only through this can one arrive at the state of **harmony above and below, the Great Accord**.

Discourse

Confucius said: "The people can be made to follow it, but they cannot be made to understand it." How could the Sage not wish to open the people's understanding? Yet if one does not first give the people a heart grounded in De and morality, and instead gives them the cunning knowledge of deception and trickery, the people will become impossible to govern and the state will surely fall into chaos.

Therefore one must first lead the people to return to the genuine and go back to the unhewn wood, establishing a foundation of De and morality. Only afterward should one gradually enable them to gain knowledge. Take De and Dao as the root; take knowledge as the branches. Let De and morality advance hand in hand with knowledge. Only then can there be harmony above and below, arriving at the Great Accord.

This is the proper sequence by which the Sage governs all under Heaven through De and morality. How could it be a policy of keeping the people ignorant in order to protect one's own position and serve only autocratic rule?

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