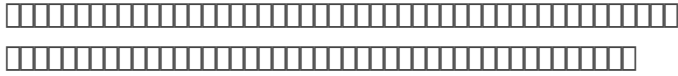


Chapter 77



Translation

Is not the Dao of Heaven like the drawing of a bow?

What is high, it presses down;

what is low, it raises up.

What has surplus, it diminishes;

what is deficient, it supplements.

The Dao of Heaven

diminishes the surplus and supplements the deficient.

The Dao of humans is not so —

it diminishes the deficient to serve the surplus.

Who can take what is surplus and offer it to all under Heaven?

Only those who possess Dao.

Thus the Sage acts but does not rely on what he has done;

he achieves merit but does not dwell in it.

He has no wish to display his worthiness.

Word Notes

- 引 — **"to draw/raise"**: To lift upward, referring to raising the bow from its resting position.
- 下 — **"to press down"**: To lower, to make crouch down.

Chapter Explanation

The Dao of Heaven is like the form of a bow being drawn. What is high, it presses down. What is low, it raises up. What has surplus, it diminishes. What is deficient, it supplements. The Dao of Heaven diminishes the surplus to supplement the deficient. The Dao of humans is not so — it diminishes the deficient to serve the surplus. Who can take what is surplus and offer it to all under Heaven? Only the person who possesses Dao. For this reason, the Sage acts yet does not rely upon his accomplishments. He achieves merit yet does not claim credit. Is it that he has no wish to display his worthiness? No — it is that he diminishes his own surplus to supplement the deficiency

of all under Heaven.

Discourse

A bow is semicircular in form. When placed lying down in its resting position, the bow's back faces upward — that is the high part — and the bow's tips face downward — that is the low part. Now draw it and hold it up: the bow's back goes downward and becomes low; the bow's tips go upward and become high. This single inversion is Heaven's Dao diminishing the surplus and supplementing the deficient — making what is high go low, and what is low go high.

Moreover, the raised and the lowered, placed together, form a complete circle. This is the fundamental form of Heaven's Dao. Once it is round, it can circulate and flow without obstruction, with no distinction between above and below. Were it not so — if one used only one side — the high would grow ever higher and the low ever lower, and the transformations of qi would reach their limit.

This world has already been ruined by contention. Therefore the Sage, having achieved merit, does not dwell in it but withdraws from the scene. He acts without relying upon what he has done. Of course this is because he has no wish to display his worthiness. But it is also because he accords with the naturalness of Heaven's Dao, diminishing his own surplus to supplement the deficiency of all under Heaven. Were it otherwise — like the people of this world who diminish the deficient to serve the surplus — they would inevitably be diminished by Heaven's Dao and could not endure for long.

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