

# Chapter 79



## Translation

Reconcile a great enmity —  
lingering enmity remains.  
How can this be called good?

Therefore the Sage holds the left tally  
yet presses no claim upon others.

Those who possess De attend to the tally;  
those who lack De attend to the tax levy.

The Dao of Heaven plays no favorites —  
it is always with the good.

## Word Notes

- 𠄎 — **"the left tally"**: A contract written across the seam of two pieces, split into left and right halves. The left half serves as the creditor's stub. The holder of the left tally waits for the other party to come and match tallies; he does not go seeking people out.
- 𠄎 — **"the tax levy"**: The method of collecting taxes in the Zhou system. One who calculates amounts and exacts from people.

## Chapter Explanation

When a great enmity has been reconciled, although it may appear reconciled on the outside, lingering enmity must remain within. How then can this be called good?

For this reason the Sage holds the left tally, waiting for people to come and seek a match, rather than going out to press claims upon others. Therefore, one who possesses De is like holding a tally — people naturally come seeking the match. One who lacks De is like managing tax collection — going out to exact from people, and people are not pleased.

Moreover, when people unite of their own accord, there is Dao within it. Heaven bestows, and people return of their own accord. But the Dao of Heaven plays no favorites — it is always with the good.

# Discourse

This chapter honors the kingly way and denounces hegemonic techniques.

Throughout the ages, all who acted as hegemons among the feudal lords necessarily relied on military force. First they used military intimidation to overawe others, and only then did they negotiate peace. Having relied on military intimidation, there could not but have been killing and wounding. Killing others is what people most bitterly resent — this is the greatest enmity. To forge such enmity and then negotiate peace: can this peace be called good?

Moreover, those who use hegemonic techniques are not truly advocates of peace. They merely negotiate peace so that others will grow close and let down their guard. Then they can devise all manner of clever methods to absorb others' rights — and that is all.

Consider Laozi's single phrase: **"those who lack De attend to the tax levy."** This truly captures the entirety of the hegemon-states' deceitful stratagems.

Yet since it is reconciliation born of enmity, and after reconciliation they again absorb others' rights — how can such peace succeed? It must inevitably fracture. The very moment of negotiating peace is precisely the starting point of future wars and slaughter.

This is why, after the Five Hegemons of the feudal states, the era became the Warring States. People only know that the seven great powers were cruel and inhumane; they see them as the sinners produced by the Five Hegemons. They do not realize that this calamity of war was already gestating during the time when the Five Hegemons were assembling the feudal lords.

Were it not so, why would even a five-foot youth of the Confucian school be ashamed to speak of the Five Hegemons? It is not because they grandly discuss the kingly way and look down upon utilitarian achievement. It is truly because, from principle alone one may deduce that using hegemonic techniques must inevitably brew the disaster of war. Therefore they cannot bear to speak of it and dare not speak of it.

Even without speaking, later generations still secretly appropriated their techniques of power. If one were to further praise their achievements, then everyone would imitate them, and the proper way would be lost. Would that not be terrible?

Furthermore, to use hegemonic deception against others is something the Dao of Heaven does not permit. How so? The Dao of Heaven is the natural Dao. The hegemon kills people through military force and robs people of their interests through scheming — these are things people naturally detest. What people detest, Heaven also naturally detests. When Heaven and people both detest a thing, failure naturally follows.

How different is one who possesses De! He cultivates De and practices humaneness. Without seeking outwardly to reconcile with others, Heaven bestows and people return of their own accord. Consider King Wen, who treated people with humaneness and generosity: afterward, when King Wu was at the Mengjin ford, without any prearranged assembly, eight hundred and more states came

of their own accord and collectively proclaimed King Wu as the Son of Heaven.

Is this not stronger beyond measure than forcing matters through the mixed deceptions of hegemony?

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