

Guanzi : “The Inner Enterprise”

The Fall 2005 offering of P/E374 will not deal with the text introduced here, but since the issue arose in class of whether there are texts that seem part of the intellectual tradition we call “Daoist,” I’m posting this reading on the “Course Tools” page for those who may be interested. The introduction is similar to one that I have used for many years in 374 coursepacks. About five years ago, a scholarly translation and study of this text was published by Harold Roth: *Original Tao: Inward Training (Nei-yeh) and the Foundations of Taoist Mysticism*. Those interested in pursuing this text further should consult first Roth’s excellent work.

Towards the close of the fourth century B.C. the new ruling house of the state of Qi 齊 decided to strengthen its prestige by establishing an academy at its capital city of Linzi. This academy, which was located near a gate in the city wall known as the Jixia 稷下 Gate, was intended to serve as a magnet for intellectual talent that would both redound to the credit of the Qi rulers and also provide it with a promising group of young men from which to recruit government talent. This institution became known as the Jixia Academy, and it became the intellectual center of early third century China.

Jixia was attractive to learned men of every variety. We do not know precisely how men came to receive appointments there, but it seems likely that all that was needed was for a master and his disciples to find a patron among the patricians of Qi to recommend an appointment to the ruler. If the Qi court deemed such a master worthy of installment among the wise men of Jixia, then he would receive from the ruling house a stipend sufficient for his needs—including his need to house and feed his disciples—and in return he would simply be expected to remain at Jixia, accepting disciples and participating in the ceremonial events of the Academy. Once the most famous masters of China were assembled at Jixia, young men came there in numbers to select a master and be trained in some tradition that would provide them with a path to employment, fame, or simply intellectual fulfillment.

The *Guanzi* 管子, from which the reading translated below is selected, is an eclectic book compiled during the third century BC that appears to be a compendium of writings from the academy. The chapter you will read, “The Inner Life” (*Neiye* 內業), seems to be the product of the Department of Daoism. It is particularly interesting in that it attempts to rationalize general practices of self-cultivation, meditational techniques, dietary rules, and so forth, by linking them to a portrait of nature and of metaphysical forces. Looking at the practical aspects of the text, if the author was in fact a devotee of texts such as the *Dao de jing*

then “The Inner Life” may give us some insight into Daoist-style practices which lay behind murky texts such as Laozi’s. On the other hand, given the discussions of Nature and the forces of the universe, the chapter could also be read as a Naturalist text composed by someone devoted to certain traditional meditative and dietary practices assignable to no one school. When we discuss Naturalism later on, we will note that various styles of naturalistic thinking seem to have gained great momentum from the environment of the Jixia Academy.

In the translation that follows, the text is divided into 18 titled sections. Some of these section breaks are indicated in modern editions of the text, but others have been added for clarity. The section titles do not appear in the Chinese text, and have been added here only to make it easier to keep track of the argument of the text. The typographical arrangement of the text has been made in an effort to make the meaning easier to grasp, but the “Inner Enterprise” is also a text dominated by rhymed sequences, and so the verse-like structure is especially fitting. I have not, however, tried to parallel the rhyming sections of the original through the format.

Bear in mind that the term repeatedly translated as “heart” actually combines the functions that we generally separate into the heart (affective powers) and mind (cognitive powers). In one particularly clear instance where the cognitive aspect is stressed, the term is translated as “mind.” The Chinese term, *xin* 心, is discussed in more detail in the online Glossary.

GUANZI 管子 : THE INNER ENTERPRISE (Neiye 內業)

Section 1: *The essential qi*

It is the essence of things that gives life to them.

Below, it gives birth to the five grains;
above, it is the ranks of stars.

Flowing between heaven and earth:
we call these ghosts and spirits.

Stored within the breast:
we call these sages.

This *qi* is

So bright! As though climbing to heaven.
So dark! As though entering the abyss.
So broad! As though permeating the sea.
So compact! As though residing within oneself.

This *qi*

Cannot be detained through physical force,
but may be brought to rest by force of virtue.
It may not be summoned by means of sound,
but may be received through one's thoughts.

To guard it alertly without fail,
this is called perfect virtue.

When virtue is perfected wisdom emerges
and all the things of the world are grasped.

Section 2: *The nature of the heart*

The form of the heart is

Spontaneously full and replete,
Spontaneously born and complete.

It loses this form through

care and joy, pleasure and anger, desire and profit-seeking.

If are able to rid itself of

care and joy, pleasure and anger, desire and profit-seeking,
the heart returns to completion.

The natural feelings of the heart
cleave to rest and calm;
Don't trouble them, don't derange them,
and harmony will spontaneously be perfect.

So gleaming! As though just beside.
So dim! As though ungraspable.
So remote! As though exhausting the far limit.
Its basis is near at hand; daily we draw its force of virtue.

Section 3: *The Dao*

By means of the Dao forms are made full,
yet men are not able to cleave firmly to it.

Once gone it may not return,
Once come it may not remain.
So silent! None hears its sound.
So compact! It resides in the heart.
So dark! Invisible of form.
So overflowing! It is born along with me.
 Its form unseen,
 Its sound unheard,
 Yet its doings perfectly ordered.
Such we call: the Dao.

The Dao has no fixed place;
it dwells at peace in a good heart.
When the heart is tranquil and the *qi* aligned,
the Dao may be made to stay.

The Dao is not distant,
people gain it in being born.
The Dao never departs,
people rely on it for awareness.
How compact! As though it could be bound up.
How remote! As though exhausting all nothingness.

The natural being of the Dao
abhors thought and voice.

Refine the heart and calm thoughts,
and the Dao may be grasped.

The Dao
Is what the mouth cannot speak,
Is what the eye cannot see,
Is what the ear cannot hear.
It is the means to refine the heart and rectify the form.

Men die when they lose it.
Men live when they gain it.
Affairs fail when they lose it.
Affairs succeed when they gain it.

The Dao has neither root nor stalk,
nor leaves, nor blossoms.
Yet the things of the world gain it and are born;
the things of the world gain it and mature.
This is termed: the Dao.

Section 4: *The sage.*

The pivot of heaven is uprightness.
The pivot of earth is flatness.
The pivot of man is quiescence.

Spring, autumn, winter, and summer
are the season times of heaven.
Mountains ridges and river valleys
are the limbs of earth.
Showing pleasure or anger, taking or giving,
there are the schemes of man.

The sage adapts with the times but is not transformed,
follows along with things but is not moved by them.
He is able to be balanced and tranquil
and so he is settled.
With a settled heart within,

the eyes and ears are keen and clear,
 the four limbs are strong and firm.
 He is fit to be the dwelling of the essence.

By essence is meant the essence of *qi*.
 When *qi* follows the Dao there is birth.
 With birth there is awareness.
 From awareness comes knowing.
 With knowing the limit is reached.

Section 5: *The One*

If the form of the heart
 acquires excessive knowledge, life is lost.

Unifying with things and able to transform them--
 this is called spirit-like.

Unifying with affairs and able to adapt--
 this is called wisdom.

To transform without altering one's *qi*,
 and adapt without altering one's wisdom--
 only a *junzi* who grips the One can do this.

Gripping the One without fail,
 he is able to be ruler to the world of things.

The *junzi* manipulates things; he is not manipulated by things.

He grasps the principle of the One,
 a regulated heart at his center,
 regulated words come forth from his mouth,
 he engages others in regulated affairs,
 and thus the world is regulated.

In one phrase he grasps it and the world submits;
 in one phrase he sets it and the world obeys--
 this is called impartiality.

Section 6: *The inner grasp.*

If the form is not balanced, the force of virtue will not come.
If the center is not tranquil, the heart will not be regulated.

When a balanced form controls the force of virtue
then the ren of heaven and the righteousness of earth
will come spontaneously as a torrent.
The polar limit of spirit-like brilliance shines in the understanding.
The central rightness of the world of things is flawlessly preserved.

Not letting things disrupt the senses;
not letting the senses disrupt the heart--
such is called inner grasping.

Section 7: *Controlling the essence.*

There is a spirit that spontaneously resides within the person:
it comes and goes, none can anticipate it.
Lose it and one is certain to become disrupted;
grasp it and one is certain to become regulated.
Reverently sweep its abode
and the essence will spontaneously come.
Ponder it with tranquil thinking,
calm your recollections to regulate it.
Maintain a dignified appearance and a manner of awe,
and the essence will spontaneously become stable.
Grasp it and never release it,
and your ears and eyes will not go astray,
your mind will have no other plans.

When a balanced heart lies at the center,
the things of the world obtain their proper measures.

Section 8: *The core of the heart.*

The Dao fills the world and spreads through everywhere that people dwell,
yet the people cannot understand it.
Through the explanation of a single phrase
one may penetrate to heaven, reach the limits of the earth,

and coil through all the nine regions.

What is this explanation?

It lies in setting the heart at rest.

When our hearts are regulated, the senses are regulated as well.

When our hearts are at rest, the senses are at rest as well.

What regulates the senses is the heart;

what places the senses at rest is the heart.

By means of the heart, a heart is enclosed--

within the heart there is yet another heart.

Within that heart's core

the sound of a thought is first to speak:

after the sound of thought, it takes shape,

taking shape, there is speech,

with speech, there is action,

with action, there is order.

Without order, there must be disruption,

and with disruption, there is death.

Section 9: *The flood-like essence*

Where essence is stored there is spontaneous life:

externally it blooms in contentment,

internally it is stored as a wellspring.

Flood-like, it is harmonious and even,

the fountainhead of the *qi*.

When the fountainhead never runs dry,

the limbs are firm.

When the wellspring is never exhausted,

the nine bodily orifices are penetrating.*

Thereupon one may exhaust heaven and earth

and cover the four seas.

Within, there are no confused thoughts,

without, there are no irregular disasters.

The heart complete within,

the form is complete without:

*The nine orifices include mouth, eyes, nostrils, ears, anus, and urethra.

encountering neither disasters from Tian,
nor harm from man.

This is called: the sage.

Section 10: *Physical perfection*

When a man is able to attain balanced tranquility,
his skin is sleek, his flesh full, his eyes sharp, his ears keen,
his muscles taut, his bones sturdy.

And so he is able to carry the great circle of heaven on his head
and tread upon the great square of earth.

He finds his reflection in the great purity and sees by the great light.

Attentive and cautious, he never errs,
and every day renews the force of his virtue.

Knowing everything in the world and exhausting the four poles of the earth,
he attentively nurtures his plenitude:
this is called: grasping within.

To be so and never to revert
is life without error.

Section 11: *The nature of the Dao*

The Dao is always abundant and dense,
always broad and easy,
always hard and steady.

Guard the good and never release it,
expel excess and let go of narrowness.

Once knowing the extremes,
return to the force of the Dao.

Section 12: *The charisma of the completed heart*

When the heart completed lies within, it cannot be concealed.
It may be known through the form and countenance,
seen through the skin and expression.

When such a one encounters others with the *qi* of goodness,
he becomes closer to them than brothers.

When such a one encounters others with the *qi* of hatred,

he is more dangerous than weapons of war.

The unspoken sound travels faster than a clap of thunder.

The form of the heart's *qi*

illuminates more brightly than the sun or moon,
and is more discerning than a father or mother.

Rewards are insufficient to encourage goodness;

punishments are insufficient to discipline transgressions.

But when the intent of the *qi* is in one's grasp,

the world will submit.

When the intent of the heart is fixed,

the world will obey.

Section 13: *Concentration*

Spirit-like, concentrate the *qi*, and the world of things is complete.

Can you concentrate?

Can you become one?

Can you know the outcomes of events without divining?

Can you halt?

Can you stop?

Can you grasp in it yourself and not seek it in others?

Ponder it! Ponder it! Then ponder yet again!

If you ponder and do not comprehend,

the spirits will make it comprehensible.

Yet it is not by the power of the spirits:

it is the utmost of the essential *qi*.

Section 14: *The limits of contemplation*

When your four limbs are balanced and the *qi* of your blood tranquil,

unify your thoughts and concentrate your mind.

Eyes and ears never astray,

though distant, it will be as though near.

Contemplative thought gives birth to knowledge;

careless laxity gives birth to cares;

violent arrogance gives birth to resentments;

cares and melancholy give birth to illness.

If you contemplate things and don't let go,
 you will be harried within and haggard without.
 If you don't plan against this early on,
 your life will slip away from its abode.

When eating, it is best not to eat one's fill.
 When contemplating, it is best not to carry it to the end.
 When there is regularity and equilibrium,
 it will come of itself.

Section 15: *Moderating emotions and desires*

In the life of man,
 heaven produces his essence,
 earth produces his form.
 These are combined and create a man.

With harmony there comes life,
 without harmony there is no life.
 In discerning the *dao* of harmony,
 its essence is invisible,
 its manifestations belong to no class.

When level balance controls the breast
 and sorted regularity lies within the heart,
 long life is assured.
 If joy and anger lose their proper rule,
 attend to this.
 Moderate the five desires,
 eliminate the two evils--
 neither joyous nor angered--
 and level balance will control your breast.
 The life of man must rely on level balance,
 and these are lost through the heart's joy and anger, cares and dismay.

To quell anger nothing is better than the *Poetry*.
 To dismiss cares, nothing is better than music.
 To moderate joy, nothing is better than *li*.
 To observe *li*, nothing is better than attentiveness.

To maintain attentiveness, nothing is better than tranquility.

Inwardly tranquil,
 outwardly attentive,
 able to return to your nature:
 thus will your nature be well stabilized.

Section 16: *The dao of eating*

The *dao* of eating:
 gorging is harmful, the form will not be fine;
 fasts of abstinence make the bones brittle and the blood run dry.
 The mean between gorging and abstinence is the harmonious perfection:
 the place where the essence dwells
 and wisdom is born.

If hunger or satiety lose their proper measures,
 attend to this.

If you have eaten too much, move about rapidly.

If you are famished, make broader plans.

If you are old, plan in advance.

If you have eaten too much and do not move about rapidly,
 your *qi* will not flow through your limbs.

If you are famished and do not make broader plans,
 your hunger will not be alleviated.

If you are old and do not plan in advance,
 then when you are in straits you will be quickly exhausted.

Section 17: *The magnanimous qi*

Enlarge your heart and be daring;
 make your *qi* magnanimous and broad.

With form at rest and unmoving,
 you will be able to guard your oneness and discard a myriad burdens.

On seeing profit, you will not be enticed.

On seeing danger, you will not be frightened.

With easy magnanimity you will be *jen*,
 and alone, you will delight in your person.

This is called cloud-like *qi*,

for thoughts float in it as clouds in heaven.

Section 18: *Moderation*

All human life must rest upon contentment.
 Through cares its guiding lines are lost.
 Through anger its source is lost.
 When there is care or sadness, joy or sorrow,
 the Dao finds no place.

Loves and desires--quiet them!
 If you encounter disorder, put it right.
 Draw nothing near, push nothing away;
 blessings will spontaneously come to stay.
 The Dao comes spontaneously,
 you may rely upon it to shape your plans.
 If you are tranquil you will grasp it;
 agitated, you will lose it.

The magical *qi* within the heart,
 now it comes, now departs.
 It is so small that there can be nothing within it.
 It is so great that there can be nothing outside it.
 It is lost through the harm of agitation.
 If the heart can grip tranquility,
 the Dao will spontaneously fix itself therein.

In he who grasps the Dao
 it steams through the lines of his face
 and seeps from his hair.
 There is no failing within his breast.
 With the Dao of moderating desires,
 the things of the world cannot harm him.