

**THE DIALOGUE OF THE FISHERMAN AND THE WOODCUTTER**

(*Yuqiao wendui* 漁樵問對)

by

**SHAO YONG** 邵雍 (1012-1077)

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[**Note:** I did this in graduate school in 1979 and revised it in 1980, with the assistance of my classmate Cuong Tu Nguyen (now Prof. Emeritus, George Mason University). I have not rechecked the translation since then, so I do not vouch for its accuracy. Also, it deserves an introduction and much more annotation. It is traditionally attributed to Shao Yong, but some scholars have suggested that it was written, or completed, by his son, Shao Bowen 邵伯溫.<sup>1</sup> The section headings are mine. The source text is *Shuofu* 說郛 (Sibu jiyao zibu 四部集要 子部 ed.), 92:19b-29a]

**[I. On Function]**

A fisherman was dangling his hook from the bank of the River Yi when a woodcutter happened upon him. Setting down his shoulder-pole to rest his burden, he sat on a great rock and asked the fisherman, "Can you catch fish with that hook?"

"Yes. "

"If the hook were not baited, could you catch any then?"

"Certainly not."

"Then you are not actually 'hooking' it, you are 'baiting' it. The fish benefits by the meal and sees its injury. You benefit by the fish and conceal your benefit. The benefits are the same, but the injuries are quite different. Might I presume to ask the reason for this?"

The fisherman replied, "You are a woodcutter, and operate differently than I. How can you encroach on my business? Nevertheless, I shall explain it to you. The benefits of the one are indeed similar to the benefits of the other. But the injuries in the one case are also similar to the injuries in the other. You are aware of the details, but you are missing the point.

"The fish's benefit consists in having food to eat. My benefit likewise consists in having food. The

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<sup>1</sup> See Don J. Wyatt, *The Recluse of Loyang: Shao Yung and the Moral Evolution of Early Sung Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 98-99.

fish's injury, then, also concerns food (i.e. lacking it). My injury likewise concerns food. Now, you know that the fish's benefit consists in obtaining food all day; how then can you think that failure to obtain food all day does not constitute its injury? According to this, then, the injury related to food is great, and the injury of being hooked is light. Likewise, you know that catching fish all day constitutes my benefit; how then can you think that failure to catch fish all day does not constitute my injury? Thus, in this case, my injury is great and the fish's injury is light.

"To be sure, when the fish's only life is lost for the sake of a man's single meal, the fish's injury is great indeed. But were the man's only life to be sacrificed for the sake of a fish's single meal, the man's injury would be just as great. And how can you think that when fishing on the Great Yangzi and the Great Sea the dangers are not proportionately greater?"

"A fish's benefit is to be found in water, and a man's on dry land. Despite this difference, the benefits are the same. A fish suffers from bait, just as a man suffers from possessions. Despite the difference, the injuries are the same. What difference is there, really, between them? You stated the bare bones of the matter, ignoring its functional relations, that is all."

The woodcutter inquired further, "Can the fish be eaten alive?"

"It can be eaten when cooked."

"Would you have need of my firewood in order to prepare your fish?"

"Yes."

"Then I do know something about your 'functional relations'."

"That may be so. You know the capacity of your firewood to prepare my fish, but you do not know the means by which it is able to do so. Firewood's capacity to prepare fish is longstanding indeed; it is not contingent upon your knowledge. But if the world did not know of fire's capacity to function with wood, your firewood might be piled high as hills and mountains, yet what good would it be alone?"

The woodcutter said, "I would like to hear more about this."

The fisherman began, "Fire arises in Activity, and water arises in Stillness. The mutual arising of Activity and Stillness comprises the substance of plants and trees. The mutual extinguishing of water and fire constitutes the function of water and fire.

"Function gives rise to benefit, and substance gives rise to injury. Benefit and injury can be seen in the Dispositions; substance and function are hidden in the Nature. It is with both Nature and Dispositions that the Sage achieves his ability.

"Your firewood is like my fish. Without fire they both would become rotten odors and decayed earth, without any useful function. How then would they nourish this seven-foot body of ours?"

The woodcutter said, "That the power of fire is greater than that of wood is certainly well-known. Might I presume to ask, if it be so good at burning things, why must it wait for wood before it will propagate?"

The fisherman said, "Wood is fire's substance, and fire is wood's function. Fire lacks substance, and so requires wood to be substantial. Wood lacks function and so requires fire to be functional. Thus any substantial thing can always be burned."

"Does water have substance?"

"It does."

"Is fire able to burn water?"

"Fire's Nature is to be capable of consuming but incapable of conforming. Therefore it can be extinguished. Water's substance is capable of conforming but incapable of consuming. Therefore it can be heated. For this reason there are warm springs but no cold fire. This is what I meant by mutual extinction."

"It is the way of fire to give rise to function. Does it have any substance?"

"For fire, function is root and substance is branch; therefore it is active. For water, substance is root and function is branch; therefore it is still. This is what is meant by fire's having substance and water's having function. It is the reason they are capable of mutual support and also capable of mutual extinction. This applies not only to water and fire, moreover, but to all the phenomena under Heaven. Function just happens to be like this."

The woodcutter then asked, "Can function be apprehended?"

"What can be apprehended by thought is the Nature of a thing. What can be expressed in words is the Disposition of a thing. What can be sought in images is the Form of a thing. What can be grasped by numbers is the Substance of a thing. As for function, it is the wondrous expression of the Myriad Things. It can be apprehended by thought, and yet it cannot be expressed in words."

The woodcutter asked, "If it cannot be expressed in words, then how can you know it?"

"That by which I know it surely cannot be expressed in words. And this is true not only of me – neither could the Sages express it."

"If the Sages were incapable of expressing it in words, then are the Six Classics not words?"

"On the contrary – what words have there been after the time of the Classics?"

The woodcutter expounded, "The Way of Heaven and Earth is complete in man. The Way of the Myriad Things is complete in the human body. The Way of all wonders is complete in spirit. The whole world's ability to function is thus summarized. What else can be thought? What else can be contemplated? From now on I shall know this matter; my mind is set on practicing it to the utmost. Had I not come to your door I would surely have been in grave danger."

Then they cut some firewood, cooked some fish, and ate it. When they were full they discussed the *Changes*.

### **[II. On subjective and objective knowledge]**

The fisherman and the woodcutter roamed along the banks of the River Yi. The fisherman said with a sigh, "Behold! In the multitude of the Myriad Things there has never been any confusion. My understanding roams throughout the realm of Heaven and Earth. The Myriad Things can at all times be penetrated with No-mind. Were it not for you, then with whom would I have taken refuge in this?"

The woodcutter said, "Might I presume to ask how Heaven and Earth and the Myriad Things can be penetrated with No-mind?"

The fisherman said, "No-mind means No-thought. Thoughtless thought does not subjectify the object (*bu wo wu*). Only by not subjectifying the object can the object be taken objectively."

"What do you mean by 'subject' and 'object'?"

"If we consider the subject in light of the object then the subject becomes an object. If we consider the object in light of the subject, then the object becomes a subject. The subject and the object can both be penetrated in thought. This explains how Heaven and Earth are also the Myriad Objects. How then can there be Heaven and Earth alone? If the Myriad Objects are also Heaven and Earth, how then can there be the Myriad Objects alone? If the myriad objects are also the subject, how again can there be the Myriad Objects alone? The subject is also the Myriad Objects. How then can there be the subject alone? What object is not a subject? What subject is not an object? According to this we can participate with with Heaven and Earth, and can deal with ghosts and spirits. And how much more so with men? How much more so with objects?"

### **[III. On relativity]**

The woodcutter asked the fisherman, "On what does Heaven rely?"

"It relies on Earth."

"On what does Earth depend?"

"It depends on Heaven."

"If so, then on what do Heaven and Earth together rely and depend?"

"They depend on each other. Heaven relies on form and Earth depends on *qi*. In form there is limit; in *qi* there is no limit. Existence and nonexistence give rise to each other; form and *qi* complement each other. Where there is end there is beginning. The continuum of end and beginning is what supports Heaven and Earth, is it not?"

"For Heaven, function is root and substance is branch. For Earth, substance is root and function is branch. Taking advantage of the appearance and disappearance of function is called spiritlike. Understanding the existence and nonexistence of substance is called sagely. Only the spirit and the Sage are able to participate fully with Heaven and Earth. The small man, although functioning daily, does not know it. Thus we have the danger of suffering arising and reality decaying.

"Reputation is subordinate to the fully real. Profit entails suffering. Reputation gives rise to dissatisfaction; profit is lost in surfeit. Suffering arises from surfeit; reality is lost in dissatisfaction. This principle is eternal.

"In nourishing life it is necessary to use profit. The avaricious fellow, however, considers life in the light of profit; thus does suffering arise. In establishing oneself it is necessary to use reputation. The crowd of men, however, considers life in the light of reputation; thus does reality decay.

"To steal a man's wealth is called thievery. When first it is taken one only fears it is not much. Then with the ruin of disclosure one only fears it is a great deal. Prize and plunder are one thing, yet two in name, because of the difference between profit and suffering.

"To steal a man's good qualities is called fraud. When first they are taken, one only fears they are not much. Then with the ruin of disclosure, one only fears they are a great deal. Praise and blame are one phenomenon, yet two in name, because of the difference between reputation and reality.

"It is always said that the Court is where one acquires a reputation, and the market is the place to accumulate profit. If one is able to stay in these places without conflict, then even if one shifts position nine times a day one's goods will multiply tenfold. How could suffering arise and reality decay? We know that conflict is the key to making profit, and yielding is the basis for avoiding reputation. With the coming of profit, suffering arises. With the flourishing of reputation, reality decays. Only the virtuous is able to let profit come and reputation flourish, without the danger of suffering arising and reality decaying.

"Heaven relies on Earth, and Earth depends on Heaven. How can they be far from one another?"

**[IV. On internalizing moral principles]**

The fisherman said to the woodcutter, "When all under Heaven is ordered, then people necessarily value conduct. When all under Heaven is disordered, then people necessarily value only words. Valuing conduct, the habits of truth and reality are put into effect. Valuing words, the habits of cheating and lying are put into effect.

"When all under Heaven is ordered, then people necessarily value profit. Valuing duty, the habits of modesty and politeness are put into effect. Valuing profit, the habits of stealing and grabbing are put into effect. The Three Kings valued conduct; the Five Tyrants valued words. Those valuing conduct necessarily entered into duty. Those valuing words necessarily entered into profit. Duty and profit are mutually exclusive. What a distance between them!

"Speaking this knowledge with the mouth is not as good as manifesting it in one's life. Manifesting it in one's life is not as good as plumbing it in one's mind. By speaking it with the mouth, others can hear it. By manifesting it in one's life, others can see it. By plumbing it in one's mind, the spirits can know it. If a person's astute understanding cannot be deceived, how much less so can the spirits?"

"Thus we know that having no shame in one's mouth is not as good as having no shame in one's life. Having no shame in one's life is not as good as having no shame in one's mind. Having no verbal transgression is easy; having no physical transgression is difficult. But having no physical transgression is easy compared to the difficulty of having no mental transgression. With no mental transgression, what difficulty can there be? Alas! How to find a man without mental transgression with whom to discuss mind?!"

**[V. On objective observation]**

The fisherman said to the woodcutter, "Do you know the way of observing the myriad objects of Heaven and Earth?"

The woodcutter said, "Not yet, but I would like to hear about it."

The fisherman said, "Now, what I mean by 'observing objects' is not observing them with the eye. It is not so much observing them with the eye as it is observing them with the mind. And it is not so much observing them with the mind as it is observing them by means of their principle.

"Of all objects under Heaven there are none without their principle; there are none without their

nature; there are none without their endowment. What I mean by principle can only be known by exhausting it. What I mean by their nature can only be known by plumbing it. What I mean by their endowment can only be known by perfecting it.<sup>2</sup> These three kinds of knowledge are true knowledge of the world. Although the Sages had not the means to surpass it, yet one who surpasses is not by this called a Sage.

"Now, that which enables a mirror to illuminate is its ability to unveil the forms of the myriad objects. But the mirror's ability to unveil the forms of the myriad objects is not as good as water's ability to synthesize the forms of the myriad objects. And water's ability to synthesize the forms of the myriad objects is not as good as the Sage's ability to synthesize the dispositions of the myriad objects. That which enables the Sage to synthesize the dispositions of the myriad objects is his 'Sagely ability for reflective observation' (*fangan* 反觀). It is called 'reversed observation' because it does not observe the object subjectively. Since it does not observe the object subjectively it is also called 'objective observation.' With this ability for objective observation of objects (*yiwu guanwu* 以物觀物),<sup>3</sup> how can there be a subject intervening?

"Thus I know that I and other men, other men and I, we all alike are objects. This is what enables one to use the eyes of the world as one's own eyes; with these eyes there is nothing that is not observed. Using the ears of the world as one's own ears there is nothing that is not heard. Using the mouths of the world as one's own mouth there is nothing that is not spoken. Using the mind of the world as one's own mind there is nothing that is not deliberated upon.

"So is the world's observation not broad in vision? Is the world's hearing not sharp in attention? Is the world's speech not lofty in discussion? Is the world's deliberation not great in fulfillment? He whose vision is extremely broad, whose attention is extremely sharp, whose discussion is extremely lofty, whose fulfillment is extremely great – and is able to conduct affairs that are extremely broad, sharp, lofty, and great without a single contrived act – how can we not call him the most spiritual and the most sagely? Is it only I who call him the most spiritual and sagely? Does not the whole world call him so? And is it only the world of one particular age that calls him the most spiritual and sagely? Has not the world of ten million eras called him the most spiritual and sagely? Never has anyone known of anything surpassing this."

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<sup>2</sup> Paraphrasing *Yijing*, *Shuogua* 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Laozi* 54 (*yishen guanshen* 以身觀身, etc.)

**[VI. The Compleat Angler]**

The woodcutter asked the fisherman, "What way do you follow in catching fish?"

"I use a combination of six things to catch fish."

"Is this combination of six things from Heaven?"

"Combining the six things is due to man. Once the six things are combined, however, the actual catching of the fish is not due to man."

The woodcutter, not quite understanding what was said, begged to inquire about it.

The fisherman said, "The six things are the pole, the line, the float, the sinker, the hook and the bait. If one is not included, the fish cannot be caught. However, if all six things are included and still no fish are caught, this is not due to the man. Indeed, this occasionally happens. But it never happens that the combination is lacking and yet fish are caught. Thus it is man who combines the six things, but his catching or not catching fish is due to Heaven. Of course, when the six things are not combined and fish are not caught, this is not due to Heaven but to the man."

**[VII. On Lot (*fen* 分) and Fate (*ming* 命)]**

The woodcutter said, "There are some men who pray to ghosts and spirits seeking good fortune. Can good fortune be sought by praying? Can it be obtained at all by seeking for it? May I ask the reason for this?"

[The fisherman said,] "It is said that good and evil are due to man, while misfortune and good fortune are due to Heaven. The Way of Heaven is to favor the good and plague the depraved. Do ghosts and spirits have the ability to oppose Heaven? One's own errors are very difficult to escape. How can lamenting the calamities sent down by Heaven be advantageous? The cultivation of virtue and the amassing of goodness is ever the gentleman's lot. How can there be anything more for him?"

The woodcutter said, "There are those who do good and meet with misfortune, and there are those who do evil and obtain good fortune. Why?"

The fisherman said, "Happiness and unhappiness are our fate (*ming*). What is proper to us and not proper to us is our lot (*fen*). Can man escape his fate and his lot?"

"What do you mean by 'lot' and 'fate'?"

"When the small man meets with good fortune it is not his lot, it is fate. The misfortune he deserves is his lot. When the gentleman meets with misfortune it is not his lot, it is fate. The good fortune he deserves is his lot, not fate."

### [VIII. On duty and profit]

The fisherman spoke to the woodcutter, saying, "What people mean by 'intimacy' (*qin* 親) cannot better be exemplified than by a father and son. What people mean by 'distance' cannot better be exemplified than by people on the street. When considerations of profit occupy the mind then the father and son are as distant as strangers passing on the street. Father and son, when properly relating, follow the way of their heavenly nature. This can be snatched away by considerations of profit. How much easier can something other than the heavenly nature be lost! So, if considerations of profit can change people as radically as this, can one afford to be uncautious?"

"When strangers meet and pass each other on the street, they surely do not have mutual injury in mind. That is because they are not thinking of profit. But when considerations of profit are present, strangers and father and son alike are affected. Strangers' ability to relate to one another depends on a sense of duty. How much more so the intimacy of father and son!"

"So, duty is the root of yielding, and profit is the seed of contention. With yielding there is humanity; with contention there is injury. How far apart are humanity and injury! Yao and Shun were both men; Jie and Zhou were both men. These illustrate the difference between humanity and injury. Humanity arises from duty; injury arises from profit. If profit is not subordinated to duty, it is like a subject murdering his prince, or a son murdering his father. Is this like strangers meeting in the street and greeting with just a glance and a touch of the sleeve?"

### [IX. On limits]

The woodcutter spoke to the fisherman, saying, "When I used to carry firewood, I could lift 100 pounds without injuring myself. But if I added 10 pounds, I'd injure myself. Might I presume to ask the reason for this?"

The fisherman said, "I know nothing about woodcutting. In my business, though, I have observed it to be equally true from a corresponding perspective. When I have tried to land a big fish, if I am joined in struggle with it and wish to discard it I am unable to release it. If I desire to take it I am never able to overcome it. When I finally grab one at the end of the day, I am on the verge of suffering from drowning. It is not that there is outright suffering from bodily injury; fish and firewood, in this respect, are different. But in their injury caused by greed they are the same. If 100 pounds is within your capacity, 10 more pounds might

be beyond it. Even if it is only a hair beyond your capacity, it will nevertheless be injurious. And how much more so would 10 pounds be? How different is my greed for fish from your greed for firewood?"

The woodcutter sighed and said, "From now on I know: to act only after having measured one's strength is wisdom!"

### [X.1. On the *Yijing*]

The woodcutter said to the fisherman, "You are said to be knowledgeable in the way of the *Yi*. Might I presume to ask about the saying, 'In change there is the Supreme Ultimate' (*Xici* A.11)? What is the Supreme Ultimate?"

"It is the root of Non-action."

"The Supreme Ultimate gives rise to the Two Modes' (ibid.). The Two Modes are called Heaven and Earth, are they not?"

"The Two Modes are the ancestors of Heaven and Earth, not merely Heaven and Earth themselves. The Supreme Ultimate divides, making two. The first one obtained is One. The next one obtained is Two. One and Two are called the Two Modes."

"The Two Modes give rise to the Four Images' (ibid.). What are the Four Images?"

"The great images are called *yin* and *yang*, firm and yielding. Only with *yin* and *yang* can there arise Heaven. Only with the firm and yielding can there arise Earth. This is the ultimate foundation of their beneficial achievement."

"The Four Images give rise to the Eight Trigrams' (ibid.). What are the Eight Trigrams?"

"They are the Creative, the Receptive, the Bright, the Abyss, the Enduring, the Gentle, the Joyous, and the Arousing. Succeeding one another, waxing and waning, they comprise the end and the beginning. Thus they permute and give rise to the 64 hexagrams, and the Way of the *Changes* is begun and completed."

### [X. 2]

The woodcutter asked the fisherman, "How is it that 'In Return (hexagram 24) we see the mind of Heaven and Earth' (*Tuanzhuan*)?"

"When the earlier *yang* is exhausted, the next *yang* begins to grow. The beginning corresponds to the time when Heaven and Earth begin to grow. The middle corresponds to the time when the sun begin to revolve. The end corresponds to the time when the stars and planets begin to fade. The death and birth of the myriad things, the seasonal alternation of cold and hot, the changing and shifting of day and night – were it

not for these we would be unable to perceive the mind of Heaven and Earth. This is the necessity of change in the ultimate totality of Heaven and Earth. With change there is circulation; with circulation there is duration. Therefore the *Image* [Commentary] says, 'The ancient kings shut the gates on the solstices; merchant parties did not travel; the sovereign did not inspect the realm.' Thus did they accord with Heaven."

### [X. 3]

The woodcutter asked the fisherman, "May I ask the meaning of the line 'Calamity befalls one free from error'" (Hexagram 25, line 3)?

"With error there can be deception; if one commits this there will certainly be misfortune. But that is when there is error. In the case of one who accords with Heaven in his actions, any misfortunes that result are not really misfortunes but calamities. The former case is like the farmer who cherishes abundance and yet does not diligently sow and harvest. Are not his barren fields his misfortune? As for the farmer who diligently sows and harvests but whose waters go bad and dry up, are not his barren fields a calamity? Therefore the *Image* [Commentary] says, 'The former kings forcefully responded to the times, and nourished he myriad creatures.' They valued freedom from error."

### [X. 4]

The woodcutter asked, "What is the meaning Gou (hexagram 44)?"

"Gou" means 'meeting,' such as the yielding meeting the firm. It is exactly the opposite of Guai (hexagram 43). 'Resoluteness' begins with opposed strengths; 'meeting' begins with joined strengths. For example, when *yin* begins to occur in *yang*, it is called 'meeting.' If you see this, you will perceive the mind of Heaven and Earth. The Sage's moral power transforms, and with it there is nothing that does not flourish. Thus the *Image* [Commentary] speaks of the sovereign 'disseminating his commands and proclaiming them to the four quarters.' One must examine this as carefully as one treading on frost."

### [XI. On phases]

The fisherman said to the woodcutter, "Spring is the beginning of *yang*; summer is *yang*'s peak. Fall is the beginning of *yin*; winter is *yin*'s peak. When *yang* begins it is warm; when *yang* peaks it is hot. When *yin* begins it is cool; when *yin* peaks it is cold. In warmth things are born; in heat things grow. When it is cool things are harvested; when it is cold things die. It is all one *qi*, which differentiates to make four seasons. The same is true of the myriad creatures it brings forth."

**[XII. On Sages and things]**

The woodcutter asked the fisherman, "How can we know that by which man is able to commune with the myriad things?"

The fisherman responded, "We know it by the eye's ability to perceive the colors of the myriad things, by the ear's ability to perceive the sounds of the myriad things, by the nose's ability to perceive the airs of the myriad things, and by the mouth's ability to perceive the tastes of the myriad things. Sounds, colors, airs, and tastes comprise the substance of the myriad things. Ears, eyes, nose and mouth comprise the functioning of the myriad people. Substance without definite function only alters this function. Function without definite substance only transforms this substance. The Way of human beings and things is completed by this interaction of substance and function.

"So, then, men are also things, and Sages are also men. Now, there are individual things, there are things in ten, there are things in a hundred, there are things in a thousand, there are things in ten-thousand, there are things in a hundred-thousand, and there are things in a million. Is it not man who gives rise to each and every thing and is the equal of the thing in a million? Likewise, there are individual men, there are men in ten, there are men in a hundred, there are men in a thousand, there are men in ten-thousand, there are men in a hundred-thousand, and there are men in a million. Is it not the Sage who gives rise to each and every man and is the equal of the man in a million?"

"From this we know that man is the completion of things, and the Sage is the completion of man. Only the completion of things can be called fully a thing. Only the completion of man will be called fully human. So, the completion of things is called the perfect thing, and the completion of man is called the perfect man. When this perfect thing is equivalent to the perfect man, what man is this if not the Sage? Those who say he is not the Sage are not to be believed. Why? Because of his ability in one mind to observe the myriad minds, in one body to observe the myriad bodies, in one thing to observe the myriad things, in one generation to observe the myriad generations; because of his ability with his mind to echo Heaven's intentions, with his mouth to echo Heaven's speech, with his hands to echo Heaven's labor, with his body to echo Heaven's affairs; because of his ability to recognize the seasons of Heaven above, to exhaust the principles of Earth below, to exhaust the dispositions of things and penetrate and illuminate the affairs of men between; because of his ability to extend Heaven and Earth, to come and go through Creation, to pass back and forth through the past and present and the outside and inside of men and things. Lo! Is not the Sage

generation after generation manifesting his sageliness? We cannot see him with the eyes. Although we cannot see him with the eyes, we can examine his mind, observe his traces, explore his substance and delve into his function. Although it would take a million years, still we can by his principle know him.

"People sometimes say to me, 'Outside Heaven and Earth, is there another Heaven and Earth and Myriad Things, different from these?' If there is such a Heaven and Earth and Myriad Things, neither I nor the Sage can know of it. It is commonly said that knowledge is what is knowable with this mind, and speech is what can be spoken with this mouth. If even the mind cannot know it, how can the mouth speak it? Knowledge of what the mind cannot know is called false knowledge. Speech concerning what the mouth cannot speak is called false speech. How can I follow false men and practice false knowledge and false speech?"

### **[XIII. On intuiting principles]**

The fisherman said to the woodcutter, "Zhongni (Confucius) had a saying, 'The Yin followed the ritual of Xia; what they added and deleted can be known. Zhou followed the ritual of Yin; what they added and deleted can also be known. Whoever will succeed Zhou, even one hundred generations hence, can likewise be known' (*Lunyu* 2:23). But if this is so, then why stop with one hundred generations? Millions of generations can be known.

"Everyone knows who Zhongni was, but they do not know what made him Zhongni. If one does not desire to know this, then it does not matter. If one accepts the necessity of desiring to know what made Zhongni what he was, how can one disregard Heaven and Earth? Everyone knows what Heaven and Earth are, but they do not know what makes them Heaven and Earth. If one does not desire to know this, then it does not matter. If one accepts the necessity of desiring to know what makes Heaven and Earth what they are, how can one disregard Activity and Stillness? Is not this Activity and Stillness the perfect mystery of Heaven and Earth? And in the midst of this Activity and Stillness is there not the perfect mystery of the perfect mystery of Heaven, Earth and Man? Thus we know Zhongni's ability to plumb the Ways of the Three Powers: it is called Action Without Trace. Therefore he said, 'I prefer not to speak' (*Lunyu* 17:19). He also said, 'Does Heaven speak? The four seasons simply proceed, and the hundred creatures simply arise' (*ibid.*). This is the meaning of these statements."

**[XIV. On change and adaptation]**

The fisherman said to the woodcutter, "Great indeed is adaptation to change! Were it not for the Sage there would be no way to exhaust it. Only in change can we know the decline and growth of Heaven and Earth. Only in adaptation can we know what is trivial and what is important in Heaven and Earth. Decline and growth refer to time; triviality and importance refer to phenomena. Among seasons there are the adverse and the peaceful; among phenomena there are the harmful and the profitable. If the Sage did not know how to follow seasonably the course of adversity and peace, how then would he know the cause of change? If the Sage did not know how to follow seasonably the course of harm and benefit, how then would he know the causes of adaptation? Flowing with decline and growth is change. Adjusting to the trivial and the important is adaptation. This knowledge of adaptation and change is nothing but the singular Way of the Sage."

**[XV. On life and death]**

The woodcutter asked the fisherman, "Men say there is knowledge after death. Is there?"

"There is."

"How do you know this is so?"

"We know it by Man."

"How do you define Man?"

"The combined *qi* of ear, eye, nose, mouth, heart/mind, liver, spleen and flesh are what we call Man. The spiritual force of the heart/mind is called spirit. The spiritual force of the liver is called the lower soul (*po* 魄). The spiritual force of the spleen is called the upper soul (*hun* 魂). The spiritual force of the flesh is called the vital essence. When the heart/mind's spirit arises in the eyes it is called vision. When the flesh's vital essence arises in the ear it is called hearing. When the spleen's upper soul arises in the nose it is called scent. When the liver's lower soul arises in the mouth it is called speech. Only when these eight together are complete can we speak of Man. Thus Man is the quintessence of the *qi* 氣 of Heaven and Earth and the Myriad Things.

"Still, there are some people who are not so integrated, each seeking his own kind. He who encompasses the human species is called the completely human man. He who, in terms of all species, integrates the material forces of Heaven and Earth and the Myriad Things is called the man of complete virtue. The man of complete virtue is the human man. The human man is the humane man. Only the complete man can deserve that appellation.

"Man's life is called the circulation of material force. Man's death is called the reversion of form. In the circulation of material force, the spirit and higher soul interact. In the reversion of form, the essence and lower soul coexist. The spirit and higher soul rise towards towards Heaven. The essence and lower soul return to Earth. The rising towards Heaven is called the circulation of *yang*. The returning to Earth is called the reversion of *yin*. The circulation of *yang* is visible by day and hidden by night. The reversion of *yin* is visible by night and hidden by day.

" Accordingly we know that the sun is the moon's form, and the moon is the sun's shadow. *Yang* is *yin*'s form, and *yin* is *yang*'s shadow. Man is the ghost's form, and the ghost is man's shadow. When people speak of ghosts without form and knowledge, I do not believe them."

#### **[XVI. On the roles of the small man and the gentleman]**

The fisherman asked the woodcutter, "Can the small man be done without?"

"He cannot. The gentleman is born endowed with the pure material force of *yang*. The small man is born endowed with the mixed material force of *yin*. Without *yin*, *yang* is not complete. Without the small man, the gentleman likewise is not complete. Completion comes only by their waxing and waning. When the *yang* constitutes six parts, the *yin* constitutes four parts. When the *yin* constitutes six parts, the *yang* constitutes four parts. When *yin* and *yang* are equal, then each constitutes five parts.

"Thus we know that the seasons of the gentleman and small man wax and wane. In well-governed periods, gentlemen constitute six parts (of the population) and small men constitute four. The small men certainly do not prevail over the gentlemen. In disordered periods it is the reverse of this. When gentlemen are gentlemen, subjects are subjects, fathers are fathers, sons are sons, older brothers are older brothers, younger brothers are younger brothers, ministers are ministers, and wives are wives, we say each satisfies his part. When gentlemen are not gentlemen, subjects are not subjects, fathers are not fathers, sons are not sons, older brothers are not older brothers, younger brothers are not younger brothers, ministers are not ministers, and wives are not wives, we say each neglects his part. Well-governed and disordered periods are produced by these conditions.

"The gentleman's ordinary behavior is superior to his speech. The small man's ordinary speech is superior to his behavior. Therefore, in well-governed periods sincere scholars prevail. In disordered periods, superficial scholars abound. Sincere scholars seldom do not succeed in their affairs. Superficial scholars seldom do not ruin their affairs. When success prevails, states flourish. When ruin prevails, states perish.

Populations similarly follow these in flourishing and perishing. So, the man of flourishing family and flourishing state, and the man of perishing family and perishing state, are mutually exclusive. How far apart they are!"

**[XVII. On the political use of talented scoundrels]**

The woodcutter asked the fisherman, "Among what people call talents there are the beneficial and there are the harmful. Why is this?"

The fisherman said, "'Talent' is one thing, but benefit and harm are a pair. There are correct talents, and there are incorrect talents. Correct talents are beneficial to others and to oneself. Incorrect talents are beneficial to the self, but harmful to others."

"If they are incorrect, how can we call them talents?"

"When there is something a man supposedly cannot do, and yet he does it, how can this not be called talent? The reason the Sage regrets the difficulty of talent is that his ability to succeed with the affairs of the world in turning them to correctness is rare. If he is unable to do this, even with correct talent, then talent certainly is difficult!

"There is a saying that compares benevolence with a drug's curing of illness. Now, there are times when a poisonous drug also can be used, but only once and not again. If the illness abates, it will happen quickly. If not, it will certainly kill the person. Ordinary drugs can be used daily. Serious illnesses cannot be controlled in this way. Poisons that are able to get rid of serious illnesses without harming the person have been called by ancients and moderns good medicines. The *Changes* says, 'When a great prince has the Mandate, he founds states and enfeoffs families. Do not use the small man!' (hexagram 7, line 6). According to this, then, the small man will also have his time to be of use [i.e. when there is no great prince]. When times are peaceful and government is settled, to use him would be dangerous. The *Odes* says, 'The stone of that mountain can be used to work jade' (Mao no.184). This is the talent of the small man."

**[XVIII. On the influence of moral example]**

The woodcutter said to the fisherman, "On the flourishing and perishing of states and families, and the depravity and correctness of people's talents, I have certainly received your teaching. So, why do you not select the man and put him to use?"

The fisherman said, "The one who selects the minister is the ruler. The one who selects the ruler is

the minister. The worthy and the stupid follow their own kind. How can it be otherwise? When there are rulers like Yao and Shun, there will necessarily be ministers like Yao and Shun. When there are rulers like Jie and Zhou, there will necessarily be ministers like Jie and Zhou. When ministers like Yao and Shun are born in periods of Jie and Zhou, just as when ministers like Jie and Zhou are born in periods of Yao and Shun, there will be nothing with which they can function. Although they desire to create misfortune or create good fortune, how can they put them into effect?

"So, what is cherished above will necessarily be cherished below. It is like a shadow or an echo – is there any delay between cause and effect? If righteousness is cherished above, then righteousness will be cherished below and the unrighteous will indeed keep their distance. If profit is cherished above, then profit will be cherished below, and what is unprofitable will indeed be kept at a distance. When those who cherish profit abound, then the world will decline daily. When those who cherish righteousness abound, then the world will flourish daily. Flourishing daily, it will prosper. Declining daily, it will perish. Flourishing and declining, prospering and perishing – how far apart they are! The difference rests solely with what is cherished above, and nothing else.

"How, then, could well-ordered periods ever have been without small men? And how could disordered periods ever have been without gentlemen? If they were not put to use, how could good and evil have followed and been put into effect?"

The woodcutter said, "Good men have ever been few, but bad men are always a multitude. Well-ordered periods have ever been few, but disordered periods have always been many. How do we know what you say is true?"

"We observe it in things. What things are not so? It can be compared to the five grains. Sometimes we cultivate them and they just do not sprout, while weeds, even without cultivation, grow of themselves. So we cultivate and hope for fruition. Isn't it always like this?"

"Thus we know that the ways of the gentleman and the small man appear spontaneously. The gentleman, seeing the good, enjoys it. Seeing the bad, he leaves it. The small man, seeing the good, spoils it. Seeing the bad, he enjoys it. Good and evil each follow their kind. The gentleman, seeing the good, approaches it. Seeing the bad, he opposes it. The small man, seeing the good, opposes it. Seeing the bad, he approaches it. The gentleman, seeing righteousness, advances. Seeing profit, he stops. The small man, seeing righteousness, stops. Seeing profit, he advances. Advancing righteously benefits man. Advancing for profit harms man. Benefitting man and harming man are mutually exclusive. How far apart they are!

The family and the state are the same in this respect. Their flourishing is due to gentlemen being numerous, and small men being few. Their perishing is due to small men being numerous, and gentlemen being few. He who leaves when gentlemen are many is the small man. He who leaves when small men are many is the gentleman. The gentleman cherishes life; the small man cherishes killing. When life is cherished, periods are well-ordered. When killing is cherished, periods are disordered. The gentleman cherishes righteousness; the small man cherishes profit. In well-ordered periods righteousness is cherished. In disordered periods, profit is cherished. The principle is always the same."

Their fishing and chatting being finished, the woodcutter said, "In ancient times, I have heard, there was a Fuxi. Today I feel as if I have been gazing upon his face." He bowed and thanked him, and as it was then morning, he left.