

HOW FOOLISH!

THE ESSENTIALS OF TRUE SPEECH

(*ZHEN YAN YAO JUE* 真言要決)

Anu Niemi

Zhen yan yao jue 真言要決 (The Essentials of True Speech) is a Tang-time Buddhist essay by Liu Renhui 劉仁會.¹ Extant today are the scrolls number one and three. Scroll number one is allegedly corrupt with parts of later origin, whereas scroll number three has survived in its early form, being a Dunhuang manuscript (P2044 and S2695). Neither of the scrolls have been previously translated. I have made my translation from the Taisho edition without consulting the original text situated in the Ishiyama-dera monastery in Japan. It is my intention to proceed later to scroll number three through the translation of the scroll number one.

Very little is known of the *Zhen yan yao jue*. According to Zheng A-Cai (1989: 211–212), there is no mention of the text in the various Chinese bibliographies.² Due to the fact that it is often quoted in the *Xin ji wen ci jiu jing chao* 新集文詞九經抄 and the *Wen ci jiao lin* 文詞教林, two Dunhuang texts belonging to the popular genre, Zheng (1989: 214) concludes that it must have been already in wide circulation during the middle to late Tang-period. It was carried over to Japan as early as during the Nara-period (710–784).

Zhen yan yao jue is a text introducing Buddhism to the Chinese, using quite an interesting way: through quotations from the classic Daoist and Confucian works. Excerpts from the book of Laozi, Zhuangzi, Kongzi etc. serve both as openings leading to Buddhist way of thinking, and as insights of their own right. Not unlike the first “wave” of sutra-translation into Chinese, this text turns the

¹ The translation that follows is of two thirds of the scroll number one: (Taisho shinshu daizokyo (Chinese Buddhist canon), from here on referred to as T) T85n2825p1225c–1228a. I left out the last third of the text due to lack of time. Omitted too are the first three corrupted lines. All the translations in this paper are mine unless otherwise stated.

² According to Zheng (1989: 213–214), the ten-scrolled text under the name *Zhen yan yao ji* 真言要集, listed in the *Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄 (T55n2148p0207a), is not our text in question.

native ground over a bit in order to plant the new and foreign seed. Where the first translations used words already existing in Chinese classics, as means to implant Buddhist terminology, *Zhen yan yao jue* operates chiefly on the level of popular beliefs and customs. Issues growing out of family psychology, agriculture and house-building form the field of subject-matter for our text, to which the flowing together of Confucian and Buddhist language offer an atmosphere of clarity and mutual acceptance.

Zheng (1989: 227) sees *Zhen yan yao jue* as preceeding *shan shu* 善書, “Books [that encourage one to] virtue”, a later genre of texts combining the teachings of Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. *Zhen yan yao jue*, as Zheng (1989: 229) notes: “... though written by a Buddhist hand, [it] does not place judgement as to what is good or bad in the three schools, nor does it theorize over an all-emerging doctrine ... Manifesting and explaining one another, [the citations in the *Zhen yan yao jue*] form a record of how the common people are guided towards the embracing of good and avoiding of evil.”

Acknowledgement

Gao Jun-He 高君和, M.A, of the Department of Philosophy, National Taiwan University (NTU) in Taipei, has functioned as a research assistant for this introduction. Without his generous guidance there would be nothing much for me to say.

TRANSLATION

[The one that] rejects the root in pursuit of the branches³ is burdened with Proper on her unproper stroll.⁴ Shamans and sorcerers exist [due to our need to] seek; demonic deterrents [arise from our need to] believe [in them]. Inclination to poetry and passionate diction,⁵ colorful paintings and fragrant scents; differentiating specials and rares [from ordinary and common]; overjoy in winning a game of chess. [These things are to] amuse the eyes and ears, to charm the ladies. Pre-occupied with pleasure, one will not in her whole life come to a realization. Any-

³ *Benmo* 本末, root and branches, is a familiar pair from Chinese Buddhist texts. It refers to cause and effect, or, more subtly, to things that are and things that appear to be. It is said that people, in our delusion, often mistake branches for the root, and live accordingly.

⁴ I have translated *bei zheng xing xie* 背正行邪 more or less verbatim. I think the meaning of this sentence is that one sees herself valuing virtue (carries it on her back) while in fact living according to (walking the path of) non-virtue.

⁵ I have rendered “passionate diction” tentatively from *yan fu* 豔賦.

thing less than the Middle wisdom should not be considered right.⁶ You filled with worries: do not forget to eat and sleep! Fathers and brothers stick to troubles that separate them; husband and his brothers quarrel over who [has the rights of the] first born.⁷ Within closed doors one is burdened with lessons of deceit,⁸ outside of open doors one carries out [the practice] of charity. Abrupt virtue cheats those that are near: inside causing discord, outside giving alms. Sweet talk [causes] forced smiles, gentle face [creates] humble settling. Meek mind [creates] compassion, lots of talk grants you a love-life!⁹ So, it is not for bad [things] at all that we all are striving for! If the realization¹⁰ was for evil [purposes], who would be willing to tell [others about it]? Trust your common sense, see things with fresh eyes,¹¹ do not obey fakeness. The one practicing Truth [needs not] follow [anyone], be it one or 10,000 people. The one practicing false [views] follows closely everything that there is. A herd of heretics muddles the Truth. It is hard to practice True Reality. A crowd of fakes get the Real all wrong. It is hard to convey the Real Reality. Therefore, the father of a nun gets slandered by his military brother, the dukes of the Zhou [-dynasty get bad] words from [states] they are governing.¹² This is why the way of the noble¹³ has disappeared [to dwell] somewhere secret and hidden, [out of reach of common] people. It is not only by understanding that one comes to realization. Like it is said in [The Book of] Zhuangzi: “Since [right] words [can] not be spoken, the common speech prevails.” It is said in [The Book of] Songs: “Hear the words and get it right; utter the words and loose the sight.”¹⁴ This is how common sentiments [could get one] lost and deluded. Isn’t this sad!¹⁵

6 *Mo bu jin ran* 莫不盡然. I translate this sentence according to the *Tang wudai yuyan cidian* (1997p255, from here on referred to as TW) where *mo* 莫 has an additional meaning of “should”.

7 This is my tentative translation of *jiaoxiang caier* 交相猜貳.

8 The writer of this text seems to be fond of creating parallelisms out of *fu* 負 / *bei* 背 [see above note 4]: to carry, to be burdened, and *xing* 行: to walk, to practice. Useful advice to anyone taking stuff on a mountain-hike: Wear it or carry it!

9 Freely rendered from *xin gua cibei kouduo enai* 心寡慈悲口多恩愛. Paralleled here are the scant, retreating *gua* 寡 and the excessive *duo* 多.

10 *Wu* 悟, “realization” refers here to the Buddhist notion of enlightenment, freedom from all bondage.

11 I have translated *sufan* 俗反 (“contrary to what is commonly known or acknowledged”) freely here.

12 This is my highly tentative translation of *Zhou gong you guan cha zhi yan* 周公有管蔡之言.

13 The author uses here the word *junzi* 君子, the noble gentleman of Kongzi.

14 This is freely translated from the funny *ting yan ze dui / song yan ru zui* 聽言則對。誦言如醉.

15 The intimate manner by which the reader is addressed by these funny exclamations is quite untypical for Chinese Buddhist texts. Similar exclamations appear even more in the third scroll.

We [would] all like other people to love us, but we do not like to love [all the] other people. We all hate other people hating us, but we do not hate ourselves for resenting other people. We all hate other people mentioning our own shortcomings, but we do not hate ourselves when talking of others' faults. We all want other people to trust us, but we do not like to trust [all the] other people. We all want them to be frank with us, but we do not like to behave straightforwardly towards them. The poor like it when others grant them financial favours, but the rich do not like granting other people financial favours. When you are in danger you wish others would help you, [but] when others are in danger, you are unwilling to help them. You do not want your own wives and concubines [looking such as to] to turn heads [of other men], but, looking at other people's wives and concubines you yourself wouldn't mind getting some of that extra-marital action!¹⁶ You want other people to treat your parents with respect, but, seeing other people's parents you do not want to bow in reverence. All this hard, hard work of yours, finally summing up to [one big pile of] hatred and resentment towards everyone around you. One is not aware [of the fact] that the blame due to one's [own actions will be] posited in one's own body [in the form of] feelings one can not quite put a finger on. We are not [that] different from the animals. Thus is said in The Book of Rites: "One with no manners can say [harmful things to others]; one with an animal mind cannot!" It is said [in The Book of] Kongzi: "[Even if] one is a warm person, blaming others cold-heartedly is [an act of] hatred." Though the common people know [how] to judge other people's weaknesses, they do not know that they themselves are not good at things. Though they can judge which one [of us] is not saintly, they do not know that they themselves are stupid and mediocre. Though they know that that fellow's wife is anything but virtuous, what they do not know is that their own wife has a cheater's heart. Though they know how to laugh at others having no manners, they are unaware of their own lack of empathy. Though they know how to express anger towards someone not treating them with courtesy, what they do not know is that they have no idea! If you wish to discuss her affairs, [better] first take a good look at yourself. If you laugh at him for being wrong, first investigate your own strong and weak points. If things are not like this, well, how else is one to tell you about the Middle wisdom? This is why [The Book of] Changes says: "Return to [your] self-knowledge." [The Book of] Laozi says: "The one that knows [her]self is enlightened".¹⁷ This is what I told you above!

¹⁶ ... getting some ...: freely translated from *dang yi yinxin* 蕩以姪心.

¹⁷ This is a quotation from Laozi #33, where: "The one that knows [other] people is wise; the one that knows [her]self is enlightened." *Zhirenzhe zhi / zizhizhe ming* 知人者智。自知者明。 There is an error of punctuation in both Taisho editions. I have translated the Laozi-quotes in this work from Zhu & Ren 1985.

Someone who hears [of her own] errors but does not correct them is a stupid person. [A horse that] sees the whip but does not move is a poor horse. The poor horse gets to taste the whip finally; the stupid person is disheartened by scolding eventually. The one disheartened by scolding [behaves] shamelessly towards the poor horse! It is said in the *Yijiaojing*[*lun*]: “The one with no shame is no different from animals.”¹⁸ It is said in [The Book of] Changes: “When noble meet Good they change to accord with it; when there is an error, they correct it.” It is in the Buddhist law that one confesses and repents; in the king’s (i.e. secular) law a faulty [deed] is inspected and charges are faced. If one does not confess everything, then there can be no full repentance. If one does not inspect the whole matter, then there can be no facing of charges. Therefore, the one making amends by repenting needs to make a thorough and sincere confession. The one facing charges on matters inspected needs to give a precise account [over what she did]. If one, [after having] repented makes another faulty [deed], it is [still] better than not having repented at all. If one, [after having] faced charges makes another error, it is [still] better than not having displayed [the criminal actions] at all. Thus, the one that has faced what she has done should refresh her aspiration: every day anew. The one that has repented, should clear her Mind and stay firm.¹⁹ In order to maintain Face,²⁰ one does not repeat [the same] mistake twice. This is what makes a noble person. It is said in The Book:²¹ “Keeping [one’s] morals firm, one is not deceived by good omens; having seesaw morals, one is not deceived by bad omens.” It is said in [The Book of Changes]: “Following just one set of rules [is what keeps] permanent morals firm.” One makes candles to find light; one reads sutras to find the Truth. Light is for [making] a dark room visible; Truth is for [making] a dim mind visible. If one makes candles without knowing how, even if there are candles they do not dispell darkness. If one studies sutras without seeing into Principle, even if one studies scriptures one does not dispell ignorance.

¹⁸ The reference is to *Yijiaojinglun* 遺教經論 (T26n1529), a sastra by Vasubandhu on the sutra of the Buddha’s last teaching. It was translated by Paramartha into Chinese in 557–569. The surrounding textual context is as follows:

The one that abandons shame loses morality / the one that feels shame [is the one] with true Dharma / the one that does not feel shame / is no different from animals.

Huo li can chi / ze shi zhu gan de / you kui zhi ren / ze you shan fa / huo wu kui zhe / er zhu qin shou wu xiang yi ye.

若離慚恥。則失諸功德。有愧之人。則有善法。若無愧者。與諸禽獸無相異也。(T26n1529p0286b).

¹⁹ I read *yi* 一 as firm, resolute; of one mind.

²⁰ *Yanhui* 顏回 refers probably to *yanmian* 顏面, Face, decency. The “Face” is a typical Chinese concept referring to dignity and decency in front of other people. The Losing of Face, becoming ashamed, is greatly feared.

²¹ I do not know what book is referred to here.

When one moves in a dark room, one [experiences] doubt; when one moves with an ignorant mind, one makes mistakes. One makes mistakes and does not realize them; one has doubts and does not make it visible. Though the common people know that one makes candles in order to find light by which to make the dark room visible, what they do not know is that one reads sutras in order to find the Truth by which to make the dim mind visible. How foolish of them!

The one that knows [how to play] the *qinse*,²² plucks [the chords] and makes a song; the one that does not know, plucks [the chords] and makes a purposeless sound. The one that knows [how to read] the scriptures, reads and attains the Principle; the one that does not know, reads and gets purposeless words. If a deaf person were to listen to *qinse*, she would not hear the sound of *qinse*; if an ignoramus were to read the sutras, he would not see into the Truth in them. It is said in The Book of Rites: “[Not until] you eat and drink something special, can you recognize real taste.” This is what I told you above!

Though there are many sutras and teachings, [only] the one knowing the Truth gets to their deep meaning. Though the rivers are wide, [only] the one sitting on the bow looking²³ sees into the deep currents. The one that sees into the deep currents [is the one that] steers the ship to reach to the other shore. The one that gets to the deep meaning [of the sutras] steers the Mind and escapes birth and death. One ties the net in order to find tortoise and fish. Tortoise and fish dwell in deep waters. [If] the net that is tied is not thrown into the waters to catch tortoise and fish, it [will] get all bundled up and entangled.²⁴ [This is] not how one catches tortoise and fish. One studies sutras in order to find wisdom and happiness. Wisdom and happiness dwell in deep Mind. [If one], after having studied the sutras, does not chant them to catch the Mind, [the wisdom contained in the scriptures] will remain between the covers.²⁵ [This is] not how one gives birth to wisdom and happiness. It is not either by the chanting of the sutras that one attains the deep Principle. That [would be] like stretching the net and hauling it aimlessly to the waters. Stretching the net and hauling it aimlessly to the waters.²⁶ You only get the net wet and yourself tired. Not one fish or tortoise is caught. The deep Principle is not attained by the chanting of the sutras. You only get intimate with the paper and your mind weary. Not one [inch] of wisdom or happiness is gained. It is generally known that²⁷ one ties the net and throws it into the water in order to

22 *Qinse* 琴瑟, an ancient musical instrument with strings that one plucks to make sound.

23 *Bie shuizhi* 別水者, as I see it, refers to the duty in the fishing-boat to look through water to see where the fish dwell. (See e.g. T43n1832p0725a.)

24 This is my tentative translation of *shu er gaoxuan* 束而高懸.

25 *Cheng yu hanqie* 盛於函篋, “is contained in [book-]cases”.

26 The repetition is used here probably for effect.

27 *Shi bing jie* 世並解 appears often in our text. It could be read as a fixed saying “everyone in the [Chinese] world knows that –”. I rely here on TW 1997: 26, where *bing* 並 has an

catch tortoise and fish. The one studying the sutras [intellectually] does not know to chant them in order to find the Truth. Though it is known that fish fertilizes the body, what is not known is that Truth fertilizes the spirit. The one that seeks Truth in order to fertilize the spirit, flows together with Dao and De.²⁸ The one that seeks fish in order to fertilize the body, shares her inclination with animals. Though the one with animal instincts has a human face, she harbors the mind of a beast.²⁹ Though the one flowing together with Dao and De is an ordinary person, she harbors the Bodhisattva path. The one [walking] the Bodhisattva path enriches sentient beings; the one with a beastly mind exploits others. The one with an exploiting mind considers one coin enough reason to raise a fight.³⁰ The one walking the enriching path would not fight, even [if it was] for 10,000 golden coins. A money-person with his busy mind imagines himself special. Comparing [with others] his [own] strong points and shortcomings – this will not get him anywhere! It is said in the Nirvana sutra: "Though the body is that of a man, the behavior is that of a beast."³¹ Though [she] is conditioned by the human body, her mind is like that of the Buddha's".³²

A blind woman steering a ship to the other shore is unable to see the currents and ends up on a shoal. An ignoramus reading sutras in search of wisdom and happiness is unable to recognize good inclination and ends up with pain. The blind woman stuck on a shoal does not realize herself [the fact of her condition]; an ignoramus gaining pain does not know himself [the fact of his condition]. The one that does not realize herself sees the boat and sees that it is in the water. It is the same quietness, regardless of whether the boat is moving or standing still. If someone clever [comes and] tells, she does not trust them. The one that does not know himself sees the body and sees the reading of sutras. It is the same language, regardless of whether the sutra is deep or shallow. If someone wise [comes and]

additional meaning of "all, every". Shi 世 in our context refers to the Chinese world, to the traditional Chinese worldview.

²⁸ Dao [and] de 道德, i.e. the Way and its manifestations in the world.

²⁹ Stepping aside to poetry, we read an exclamation filled with worry over similar matter in Hanshan 寒山 #242 (*Si bu cong kan* 1936:19下8–9) *renmian qinshouxin, zaozuo heshi xie?* 人面禽獸心。造作何時歇: Human face with the mind of a beast / when will this Doing end?

³⁰ Hanshan #71 (*Si bu cong kan* 1936:7上15–16), referring to Zhuangzi, has the self-abiding, non-concerned Chaos "without the holes" described as opposing the chaotic destiny of humans, who, in their desperate run to fill those holes: "... fight for one coin / ... yell: run for your life! *qiange zheng yi qian / jutou wang ming jiao* 千個爭一錢。聚頭亡命叫 (Here I borrow Red Pine's (1983 #73) translation, which I see as precise.)

³¹ *Shen ran zhangfu xing tong chusheng* 身雖丈夫行同畜生. This is from chapter 20 (Pure Actions) of Nirvana sutra (T12n375p0712a). See also Yamamoto 1973: 431.

³² *Ran shou ren shen xin ru fo xin* 雖受人身心如佛心. This is from chapter two (On Cunda) of Nirvana sutra (T12n375p0612a). See also Yamamoto 1973: 33.

tells, he does not rely on those [words]. Therefore, the one [with the ability to] divide waters (i.e. to see what's what) can not steer the blind woman's boat; the one recognizing the Principle can not increase the wisdom of an ignoramus. If the blind woman submits to steering-guide, she should [be able to] reach the other shore. If the ignoramus accepts [Buddhist] teaching, he should [be able to] rid himself of birth and death. It is generally known that a blind person seeks a current-watcher to steer the boat. What is not known is that an ignoramus seeks a person who knows the Principle [so that he can] inquire about the Way. In life we worry, fear and ponder; in death we float in circles between three different hells. How sad this is! It is said in the Analects³³: "Someone not saying 'How is it with this? How is it with this?'" I do not [know] how [to deal with].

A woman pregnant with child has no choice but to give birth; once alive we have no choice but to die. When hungry we have no choice but to eat; having eaten, we have no choice but to excrete. If we excrete but it does not come out: disastrous to the body. If we die but do not die, well ... lucky one! There is no such food [that would] not come out [as shit]; there is no such person that would not die. The only ones getting out are the morning and the evening. Death has its nice and nasty bits. More of goods and bads than you can measure. [If you] do not take a shit before eating, how can you stuff [more food] in? If you do not die before being born [again], how can you be born [again]? It is generally known that food needs its time to digest; it is not known that life takes its time to die. Sheer stupidity! In *Dazhidulun*³⁴ it is said: "I do not desire life, nor do I cherish death. With one Mind I reach for Wisdom, linger awhile and then leave."

A mirror is for illuminating (i.e. making clear the vision of) the face; wisdom is for illuminating the Mind. When the mirror is clear, dust and dirt do not stay [upon it]. When the Wisdom is clear, desire and aversion do not arise. A person with no Way [to follow] is like a cart with no axle. A cart with no axle can not be steered. A person with no Way can not function [properly]. For someone small [in mind who has still] not learned the Way, the uprooting of desires and hates [could] harm her Nature.³⁵ One does not³⁶ weed short crop.³⁷ If [however] harmful

³³ Reference is to Kongzi's *Lunyu* 論語 chapter 15, section 16.

³⁴ Reference is to chapter 23 in *Dazhidulun* 大智度論 (T25n1509p0230a).

³⁵ I render the sentence following TW 1997:22, where *bi* 必 has an additional meaning of "if".

³⁶ I see at least two levels by which one could read the amazing sequence that follows: On the verbatim level one talks about caring for the crop ("when should one weed?"), on the metaphoric level one refers to personal growth ("should one suffocate hatred; should one let it take over?"). I have chosen to render the text by the verbatim level, as it is written in the text, but you can read my personal ponderings on the metaphoric level in the footnotes below.

³⁷ Short crop symbolizes here one's own Buddha nature before the start of practice: not much in sight. The similes presented in Buddhist texts often start with a *you* 猶 (as is the case here), or a [*bi*] *ru* [譬]如. Doing my best to maintain the feel of fluidity of the original text, I have occasionally omitted the "This is like" – clumsiness altogether.

weed³⁸ [manages to] rise high,³⁹ it shadows and stops the growth⁴⁰ of new plants⁴¹ and buds, and [they remain] without [anything to] weed *them* out. If it is only few and old that reap the Truth, then the ones coming to learn the Way are truly not many. One with a lousy house has constant fear of rain and wind. One with an evil mind has constant worry over something bad happening. Therefore, by repairing the house one stops rain and wind from coming into one's room; by allowing the thinking [to be] truthful one stops ruin and disaster from entering one's mind. It is generally known that the repairing of a house removes rain and wind; [what is] not known [is that] the truthfulness of mind rids us of ruin and disaster. How foolish of them [not to know this]! It is said in The [Book of] Laozi: "One who follows this [i.e. the Way] in her own person, has real morals to herself".⁴² One with wings to fly to the sky needs not perch on mulberry trees;⁴³ one with an immortal heart needs not talk about fame and fortune. Therefore, talking about fame and fortune is a small man's petty aspiration; talking about the Way is a noble person's deep vision. For a small person, fame and fortune function as motivators; a noble person makes Dao and De her main target. It is said in The Analects: "The noble sees it [via what's] good; the small person see it [via what's] profitable." Throwing a white pearl into black mud does not dirty its [original] colour. The noble roam around the muddy world without getting their minds confused. The pine and the cypress can bear frost and snow. The wise ones can go through difficulties and hardships, knowing that after a cold hard winter

³⁸ *Youbai* 莠稗, two different weeds, occur very rarely in Chinese Buddhist texts, mostly as something to eat. But in our context, there is an obvious connection to the Nirvana sutra (Chapter 9 "On evil and proper" T12n375p0644b), where the Buddha tells Kasyapa that the Buddhist monks who do not accord with the Law should be cast aside from the order like the bad weed from a field. "like when all the weed is extinguished and none is left, *biru youbai ximie wu yu* 譬如莠稗悉滅無餘." (See also Yamamoto 1973: 162.) *You* has an additional meaning of evil-will, and *bai* that of pettiness. We could understand the *youbai* referring on the personal level to harmful habits, or false practicing.

³⁹ Rise high, *ling* 凌, has an additional meaning of insulting and bullying people. On a personal level we could read it as a reference to people who have gone up the ladder and started using that power.

⁴⁰ "Shadow and stop the growth" is translated from one character, *cuo* 挫. On personal level we can read this as controlling behavior.

⁴¹ New plants refer on a personal level to the emerging of Buddha nature from within us.

⁴² This is a slightly altered quotation from Laozi #54, where, in the context of agricultural thematics:

Well-planted does not uproot; tightly hold does not escape – A person that practices [the correct Way] has real morals to herself.

Shanjianzhe bu ba / shanbaozhe bu tuo / xiuzhishen / qi de nai zhen.

善建者不拔。善抱者不脫。– 修之身。其德乃真。

⁴³ *Qixi yu sangyu* 棲息於桑榆 has an additional meaning of "taking a rest and waiting for life to end".

the pines and cypresses will again be exuberant; knowing that after [roaming about the] corrupt world she again will reach a [true] connection with people. Throw a solid rock into the stream: 10,000 years and still not smooth. Gather a crowd of ignorants to speak Dharma to them: do it for a lifetime and still not one listens. Thus it is said in [The Book of] Changes: “Her spirit lies in knowing how to adapt”.

Eyes are for seeing the forms, Mind is for illuminating the Principle. Walking with eyes that see clearly, one does not hurt the feet. Moving with an unmoving determination, one will not trouble the spirits. When the roof and eaves are stern⁴⁴ on the outside, evil people cannot enter the house. When the Dao and De are firm within, the evil influence is unable to attack the Mind. A person from a wealthy family does not [need to] seek afar [the livelihood]; a mind full of aspiration does not [need] reasons from the outside. Not ill, one does not visit the good doctor.⁴⁵ With no wants, one does not expect⁴⁶ honours. Having abandoned desires, one does not respect gold and jade. Having abandoned names one [makes] no wishes over [whether one is] slandered or praised. Delighting in the Way, at peace with poverty – befriending with wealth does not occur in the mind.⁴⁷ Cherishing De, dwelling in seclusion – power and profit are not things to seek. The one that has rice and silk in store, [need] not worry about [being] hungry or [getting] cold. The one that cherishes Dao and De, [need] not worry over bad luck or evil [occurrences]. It is generally known that the storing of rice and silk protects one from poverty and wariness. What is not known is that by cherishing Dao and De one is provided against difficulties and hardships. Even though old Kongzi was put in the middle of the states of Chen and Cai, he still sang and played the strings with-

44 Here I read *lao* 牢 as parallel to *gu* 固 in the following stanza: *firm, secure*: attributes making a prison. See e.g. Ding 1995: 1125.

45 “When one is not ill, one does not [need to] visit the good doctor”: *wu bingzhe bu fang liang yi* 無疾者不訪良醫. In Buddhist parlance, illness refers to the state of unenlightenment cured by the *good doctor*: Buddha. In the Nirvana sutra, chapter 12 (T12n375p0648b–c; see English translation in Yamamoto 1973: 182) a parable of a woman nursing a sick child is given. In the story, the good doctor, *liang yi* 良醫 proscribes the medicine needed, with advice that the child be not breast-fed before the cure is completed. This is one of the many parables given in the Nirvana sutra that explain the teaching of permanent Buddha nature in all beings. The distinctively Buddhist teaching of no-self *wu wo* 無我 is but a phase during which the illusionary (i.e. sick) views of the self are cured; after that, according to the Nirvana sutra, the hungry child is free to return to the mother’s nipples: to the Self. Or, as in the context of our text here, after one has been cured there is no need for doctors, i.e. Buddha’s teachings. The spirit of the Nirvana sutra is strongly present in our text here, one of its obvious goals being to present Buddhism to the Chinese in its ultimate, positive, form. The standpoint of this text is understandable, since the basic teachings of Buddhism even in our days are often mis-read as something nihilistic and grim.

46 I translate *gui* 規 according to TW 1997: 148.

47 This is my tentative translation of *caiyou mo fang* 財友莫訪.

out stopping.⁴⁸ It is said in The Book of Changes: “Poverty is what we have in common.” The one that talks about likes and wants and not about Dao and De, is not [on the side of] True Suchness. The one that eats shells of distilled grains and not the delicate things is not [on the side of] quality rice.⁴⁹ The one that dresses in coarse hemp and not in soft fabrics is not [on the side of] fine silk. The one that walks with cane and whip, not riding the fat horse, [shows that she] does not care about the horse. It is generally known that one seeks horse and carriage in order to replace [with it] the walking. One seeks silks in order to replace the hemp. One seeks the finest foods in order to replace the shells of grains. What is not known is that one practices True Wisdom in order to get rid of likes and wants. The likes and wants are not satisfactory [as] the body dies and life is lost. Isn’t this foolish! Talking about Dao and De, but not practicing [the Principle], is like not eating when hungry. Practicing the Way, but not delighting in it, is like forcing oneself to eat. Delighting in the Way, but not gaining the results,⁵⁰ is like eating with an appetite but not getting filled. Delighting in the Way and gaining results, the spiritual nature⁵¹ is let loose. Eating with an appetite and getting fulfilled satisfies the body’s *qi*.⁵² Though the common people know that by food one satisfies the body’s *qi*, what they do not know is that by Dao and De one pacifies the spiritual nature. If the body is satisfied (i.e. strong) but the spirit is weak, [this could be] likened to when the subjects are strong and the emperor is weak.⁵³ When the subjects are strong and the emperor weak, the state will give up the crown. When the body is strong but the spirit is weak, the body will perish and die. Clever talking is not right behaving. The one that appreciates the canvas does not [use it to] scribble vain words.⁵⁴ An untamed person prefers ornamented [language], while an orderly person likes to communicate. If the communication is wide and far, the Mind is not true. If the [language] is filled with ornaments, the aspiration is not pure. Coarse clothing is for the one with pure aspiration; unconcerned communication⁵⁵ is for the one with a true Mind. If one regards people this way,

48 This reference I am not familiar with.

49 The meaning of *dao liang* 稻梁 is unclear. I assume that the *liang* 梁 was originally written as *liang* 粱, and translate it accordingly.

50 I tentatively translate *zhong* 終 as “gaining the results”.

51 In a Buddhist context *shenming* 神明 refers both to the deities of heaven and earth and to the spiritual nature (*shixing* 識性) of the sentient beings. See: Ding 1995: 1821.

52 *Qi* 氣, life-force or vital energy, is a central concept in Chinese medicine.

53 “Subjects are strong and the emperor is weak” is a free translation from *chen jiang jun ruo* 臣強君弱. A verbatim translation would be: “Your humble slave [i.e. me, I] strong, You [referring to the emperor] weak.”

54 *Su* 素 is a white silk fabric upon which calligraphy was stroked. *Shici* 飾詞 refers to words that are decorative and round-about.

55 *Dan* 淡, unconcerned, in the context of speech and words, appears in Laozi #35: “The words Dao utters are unconcerned and flavorless” *dao chu yan / dan wu wei* 道出言。淡無味. I see

one can not go wrong. It is said [in The Book of] Changes: “Tolerant governing teaches [people] improper [behaviour].” It is said in The Book of Rites: “A true gentleman communicates like running water.” It is said in The [Book of] Laozi: “Honest words are not pretty; pretty words are not trustworthy.”⁵⁶ If one talks and frets over [things] not present here and now,⁵⁷ the Principle gets hidden. If one ponders much over not making progress, the mind gets weary. The filial son taking care of the family is unaware of the toil and pain. A true person cherishing the Way sees [the concerns of] the mortal body as secondary.⁵⁸ Doing whatever comes along, he tends to his family; at ease where ever she is, she cherishes the Way. It is said in [The Book of] Kongzi: “[A superior man] does not seek satiety in his food nor ease in his dwelling-place.⁵⁹” The Kongzi way [would be to sleep having] a bent arm [for a pillow] in some dirt alley!⁶⁰ The Dao (i.e. Buddhist) way [is to] sit at ease in the midst of mountains and forests.⁶¹ A chaste woman does not [marry according to the advice] of a bad match-maker. True Reason⁶² does

unconcerned communication closely related to the temporary words *shi yan* 時言, words that are used and then disregarded, as opposed to witty speech *qiao yan* 巧言 that makes a mark, stays, and gathers crowd.

- 56 This is a quotation of the last chapter of Laozi, chapter 81.
- 57 “Present here and now” is my tentative translation of *wu dangzhi* 無當者.
- 58 I have translated *wai* 外 here according to the TW 1997: 364.
- 59 Translation of the Kongzi quote: Pan & Wen 1993: 9. *Shi wu qiu bao, ju wu qiu an* 食無求飽。居無求安 is a quotation from Kongzi’s *Lunyu* 論語, chapter 1, section 14. A similar idea is presented in *Lunyu* chapter 17, section 21, where Kongzi describes the “true gentleman” (or: “superior man”) who, while in mourning, does not “enjoy pleasant food” and who, while “comfortably lodged in his home, – does not feel at ease either. *Shi zhi bu gan – ju chu bu an* 食旨不甘 – 居處不安” (translation: Pan & Wen 1993: 217).
- 60 *Qugong louxiang* 曲肱陋巷. *Qugong*, “bent arm for a pillow”, is from *Lunyu* chapter 7, section 16. “The Master said, “With coarse food to eat, with water to drink, and my bent arm for a pillow, I still have joy in these things. *Fan shu shi yin shui, qugong er zhen zhi* 飯疏食飲水。曲肱而枕之” (translation: Pan & Wen 1993:71). The second part, “in some dirt alley” is from *Lunyu* 6:11, where a gentlemanly Mr. Hui, “with a single bamboo dish of rice, a single gourd of water, living in a lowly lane *Yi dan shi yi piao yin zai louxiang* 一簞食一瓢飲在陋巷” (translation Pan & Wen 1993: 57) has his joy unclouded. Mencius 4b:29 mentions him, too: “In an age of disorder, Yen Hui lived in a mean dwelling, subsisting on a bowlful of rice and a ladleful of water, and remained happy in a life whose hardship would have been beyond the endurance of others.” (translation D. C. Lau 1970: 134). We may summon that in the context of our text *qugong louxiang* is quoted in order to create an effect of abandonment of the body, in surroundings conceived as miserable.
- 61 To sit at ease in the midst of mountains and forests *anzuo shanlin* 宴坐山林 refers to the Buddha Mind (*xin* 心) that is said to dwell in the “quiet sitting”. *Anzuo* appears in the Vimalakirti sutra T14n475p0539c: “The Mind does not dwell within, nor is it on the outside; it is quietly sitting”. *Xin bu zhu nei / ye bu zai wai / shi wei anzuo* 心不住內。亦不在外。是為宴坐. (For a different rendering, see Watson 1997: 37.) In the context of our text *anzuo shanlin* functions as an obvious opposite to the *qugong louxiang*, describing an attitude of respect both for the body and to one’s surroundings.
- 62 I translate *zhili* 至理 on occasion as True Reason, on occasion as Ultimate Principle.

not declare words that are not true. A good matchmaker does not make couples in haste; true speech does not utter words rashly. True morality of a matchmaker [lies in her ability] to make considerate choices. True Reason of speech [lies in the ability] to speak unrash words. Arranging marriage according to true morality, the ones marrying [are] not mislead; speaking according to the Ultimate Principle, the listeners have no doubt. Not doubting, [the listener] will accept [the said] and put it to [good] use; not mislead, [the ones marrying] are joined to the family. A family that obtains an agreeable daughter-in-law is able to bring peace and harmony to the whole clan; a mind that attains the True Principle is able to pacify one hundred human bodies. When the whole clan [lives in] peace and harmony [together], the leaves and branches extend far outside. When a hundred human bodies are pacified, the seed of Prajña wisdom is shining within. A strong clan is spoken of as “leaves and branches extending far outside”; a realized person is spoken of as “the seed of Prajña wisdom shining within”. Though the common people know that one visits a good matchmaker in order to find a good daughter-in-law, what they do not know is that one turns to truthful speech in order to find profound truth. How foolish of them! It is said in The Book of Kongzi: “One who is free to choose, yet does not prefer to dwell among the Good – how can he be accorded the name of wise?”⁶³

Medicine that does not suit the illness is not as good as not taking [any medicine at all]; not speaking according to the Truth is worse than not speaking [at all]. Medicine that does not suit the illness, on the contrary, harms your life; speaking not according to the Truth, on the contrary, harms your being. It is said in [The Book of] Changes: “When confused about it (i.e. the Way), talking about “how to improve” emerges.” It is said in The Book of Laozi: “Opening up the gates, increasing the Doing: all your life no help.”⁶⁴ An ignoramus does not look for morality in a woman when wanting to marry. Only looking for the land and property to be abundant, seeing as important the good looks. When the woman is special [in her looks], [her behavior will be] reckless, proud and improper. When her family is special (i.e. wealthy), she harbors rude [behavior]. Being rude, she disagrees with her husband’s parents. [With] proud and improper [behavior] she will get people slapping [her in the face] and misleading [her]. By not agreeing with her husband’s parents, inside and outside [there is] no harmony. Having people slapping and misleading her, inside and outside [there are] dark shadows of improper behavior and lust. The ignoramus will not realize it! At the same time fearing the suspicions of the husband to arise, and cold-heartedly carrying on

⁶³ Translation: Waley 1938: 102. The quotation is from *Lunyu*, chapter 4, section 1: *Ze bu chu ren yan de zhi* 擇不處仁焉得智. (See also Pan & Wen 1993: 30–31.)

⁶⁴ The quotation is slightly altered from Laozi #52. Preceding this stanza we read: “Blocking the entrances, closing that gate: all your life no hard work.”

what she is doing. Looking for shamans and tricks, and not worrying [whether she has] female virtues [or not]. Mind fixed on repute and looks,⁶⁵ fancy dress and a beautiful dowry. Fawning on the husband, she pretends to be intimate with Virtue, and falsely accuses [both] her seniors and juniors. [It is] the husband [who gets to] pay for [what the] wife said. [His own] flesh and blood, [growing] distant and cold [towards one another], finally spreading their mutual resentment all through the skies. Like this, to no avail! More and more [people get upset]. Endangering the living does not accord with Life. [One should consider as] true relatives [both] the wife [and other] people. [Men have] lost countries and forgotten their families for the sake of that female form! The flourishing Zhou culture [kept] a front of fine arts and virtue, [while] behind [closed doors there was the tradition of keeping] concubines. When Zhou, [the last emperor of] the Yin [-dynasty] died, [his] retribution [was to be] born to the self of an older sister. Adding to that herd of small [-minded], how is one to reach beyond words? One can not realize the early morning of the female chickens. It is said in The [Book of] Songs: "With fierce [slashing] of her long tongue, [she] moves up the ladder [by creating] disorder. [Having the] self of a robber, one falls from the heaven and is [re-] born as a wife."

No sameness, therefore no difference. No agreeing, therefore no disagreeing. No gathering; no dispersing. No love; no hate. No sorrow; no happiness. No attainment; no loss. No birth; no death. No friends, no strangers.⁶⁶ In this world [people are] friends in front and strangers behind, or [they are] strangers in front and friends behind.⁶⁷ If wife and husband do not fit [together] and do not understand [each other], [they] show [their] estrangement. If a married couple truly love and cherish [each other], [they are] intimate behind [closed curtains]. Brothers born of the same womb, sharing the [ancestral] *qi*, show [in their features that they are] intimate. One secretly satisfied over break-ups hides his estrangement. A couple that do not get along to begin with turn to sticky glue. Brothers that are originally one turn to strangers in the street. Casting sidelong glances, [full of] hate, anger, suspicious and jealousy. Manouevring with each other,

65 *Sheng se* 聲色, how things sound and how they look like. Sound and form are two of the five physical senses.

66 I read *qinshu* 親疏, intimacy and distance, "us and them", simply as friends and strangers.

67 *Xianshu houqin* / *xianqin houshu* 先疏後親 / 先親後疏: what happens out in the open and what happens behind closed curtains. I think one could also render *xian* 先 in this context as "to show, to be open about something", and *hou* 後 as "to hide, to keep secret". In personal level we could read the section referring to two-faced behaviour that derives from one's need to cover true sentiments in order to "save Face". In communal level the text challenges once again the traditional family-oriented lifestyle: things that happen behind the closed doors, our text urges, demand a strong cover. Throughout the text descriptions of surface, appearances and Face emerge.

supporting their own families. [Fighting] not only [for the] love of mother and father, but for the prospect of money and things. Old habits die hard. This is universally true, whether you are familiar with it or not. One befriending wealth get unfamiliar [with those whose] funds run out. One befriending looks abandons [those whose] beauty wanes. One befriending food leaves if food is finished. One befriending reputation cuts off [acquaintance] when fame is lost. One befriending power [treats as] children [those whose] power has left them. One befriending abilities abandons [those whose] skill has been all used up. If there is a reason for joining, there has to be a reason for leaving; with no reason for according [with something], there need not be any reason for separating. Having a reason is not lasting, as the reason for breaking up of affinity is time. Not having a reason is lasting, as the reason for separating from an accordance is not any time of day. No reason is called “joining with the Way”; having reason is called “befriending with the world”. What a small-minded person keeps distance to: something unprofitable that can not be joined; what the sage keeps distance to: something non-Dao that can not be accorded with. Not according with something that is not of Dao disperses [the possibilities of functioning] against the Way; not joining with something that is not profitable leaves out [the possibility of being left with] non-profit. It is said in the Book of Rites: “The virtue of a scholar resembles advance, not retreat.” It is said [in The Book of] Zhuangzi: “The sage remains cool about closeness; the small [minded] person gets willingly entangled.” No mistake here! Joyous appearance does not measure up to tolerating insults; many smiles do not measure up to not being angry. Not killing is better than giving birth; avoiding evil is better than looking for happiness. Not being stingy is better than giving out alms; a respectful heart is better than having [an air of] well-offness and respectability.

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