

## 12) The Comparison Between The Sage And The Ordinary

What the world values are wealth, rank, a long life and goodness. What people enjoy are good health, rich food, fine clothing, beauty and music. What they hate are poverty, low position, dying young. What people worried about is that their body should not be in good health, that they might not be able to taste rich food, put on fine clothing, see beauty or hear good music. When they cannot obtain these things, they are plunged into deep sorrow and worry. Such attendance to the externals is foolish. The rich hustle and bustle and hoard up wealth. Their method of attending to the externals of life is undependable. When a man is born, sorrow comes with it. Life comes from a source and death is a return to it. Thus, beginning follows the end in a continual endless cycle. The only way to stop this cycle is to accept Tao.

All products in the world are results of refined and beautiful material force. Man takes the best of it to nourish his life, but it is all from heaven. So, do not let the artificial submerge the natural. Do not for material purposes destroy your life. Do not sacrifice your character for your fame. Guard carefully your nature and do not let it go astray. This is called returning to one's nature.

One who attains Tao sees perfect beauty and feels perfect happiness. Happiness and anger, joys and sorrows, should not enter one's heart, for this universe represents the unity of all things. When one perceives this unity and is united with it, he regards his bodily form as dust of the earth, and the cycle of life and death but as the alternation of day and night. He cannot be disturbed by such accidents, much less by the occurrences of fortune and misfortune. He shakes off an official position as he shake off dirt, knowing that his self without allowing it to become lost in external changes. For the process of change going on in all things is continuous and endless.

He who does not deviate from the source of all things is a man of God. He who does not deviate from the Essence is a divine person. He who does not deviate from the Truth is a perfect man. He who regards the Heaven as the source. Tao as the foundation, and Tao as the portal, which is evidenced in all changes of life is a sage. He who guides himself by the principle of humanity in performing acts of kindness, follows justice as his principle, observes ceremony for his conduct, expresses the sense of harmony by means of music, and thus becomes compassionate and kind, he is a gentleman.

The Sage rests in the solution of things and is dissatisfied with what is not a solution. The common men are satisfied with what is not a solution and do not rest in what is a solution.

The man of perfect character cannot be burnt by fire, nor drowned by water, nor hurt by the cold of winter or the heat of summer, not torn by bird or beast. In nourishing his nature, the superior man acts naturally as if nothing happens, but that does not mean that he lets things take their own course. Instead he acts so as to make the best choices and remain firm in holding to the Mean, and dares not go wild or make careless mistakes.

Those who understand Tao must necessarily apprehend the eternal principles and those who apprehend the eternal principles must understand their application. Those who understand their application do not suffer material things to injure them.