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WATER MIRROR REFLECTING HEAVEN

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Preface

When the universe of a billion worlds is contemplated in stillness, one sees that bad karma has welled up and filled it all. Nations ravage nations creating world wars; families slay families creating civil strife; men murder men causing wars between self and others; people kill one another, causing war between the mind and the nature, and so forth, until space battles space, and water fights water, creating wars between form and the formless. There are so many wars! How sorrowful, how painful! Every single disaster comes from acts of destruction.

If we do not wake up soon and renounce the causes, conditions, methods, and activities of destruction, it will certainly be difficult to avert great disasters and to obtain peace and happiness.

Disasters are produced from acts of destruction; acts of destruction are produced from the mind. If the mind does not give rise to thoughts of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech and taking intoxicants, if these five precepts are sternly maintained, if the triple study (of morality, concentration, and wisdom) is cultivated energetically, then it is certain that all bad karma can be erased. The original face will not be at all difficult to recognize, and it is certain that

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pp 154 - 168 omitted

169

the inherent wisdom will spontaneously appear. The scenery of the original ground has a special and wonderfully delightful flavor that is quite inexhaustible. If we wish to try its taste we must simply purify our minds.

With great heroism let us direct our thoughts toward the good; resolve to cultivate and realize the results of the Way; take others across and reach the other shore together; join the assembly of all superior and good people in one place; and forever be companions of irreversible Bodhisattvas.

This is the very purpose for which my book, WATER AND MIRROR REFLECTIONS ON AVERTING CALAMITIES, has been written. The purpose is easy to discuss but very difficult to achieve. Why is that? Consider the question of good done by living creatures. If you grab them by the ear, admonish them three times, and teach them five times, they still do not alter their conduct, yet if they encounter bad ways they advance without faltering and learn without any need for instruction. Those who understand that they should turn away from the path of confusion are few indeed.

Like the moon reflected in water, like flowers in a mirror, all these things are merely images without any substance. It may be said to be hoping for that which is without hope, accomplishing what cannot be accomplished, so it is for this reason the book is called WATER AND MIRROR REFLECTING HEAVEN.

TODAY

What is the present time? It is a time of the imminent extinction of living things. As we look around the Dharma Realm we see that countries battle each other, families contend with each other, individuals struggle against one another, on and on until great wars between world systems arise. An ancient author said, "War results from quarrels over land, and corpses fill the fields. War arises from conflicts over cities, and corpses fill the streets. The earth is made to eat the flesh of men. Such offenses are not expiated by death."

I deeply hope that the leaders of all nations will embody the preference heaven and earth have for life; establish good government and dispense justice; banish quarrelling and dispense with greed; ignore themselves and help others; benefit themselves by benefitting others; see the universe as one family and see all people as one person. A worthy one of old said, "If anyone is killed, it is as if I killed him myself. If anyone has been cheated, it is as if I cheated him myself." AT all times, look within. "If you offend before heaven, you have no place to pray."

YESTERDAY

At the age of fifty one can know the errors of the previous forty-nine years. This is not far from being a "superior man who changes his ways and moves towards the good." An author in ancient times said, "I know that my past faults were left uncorrected, yet I know that in the future I may mend my ways. I know that I

have not gone too far down the path of confusion, and I am aware of today's rights and yesterday's wrongs."

In Buddhism it is said, "Of all bad karma which I have done based on beginningless greed, hatred and stupidity, committed by body, mouth and mind, I now repent and reform. Offenses arise from the mind; use the mind to repent. When the mind is forgotten, offenses are no more. Mind forgotten and offenses eradicated, both are empty. This is called true repentance and reform."

It is my hope that living beings of the Dharma Realm will read this, carefully sample its flavor, and put it into actual practice. It is my hope that they will deeply bring forth a sense of repentance and reform. Confucious said, "To have faults and not change is indeed a fault... When you have faults, do not shrink from change." There is no greater good than this.

TOMORROW

Since we have been born in this age, we must resolve to be new and great people. The engraving on the bathtub of Emperor T'ang said, "If you can renew yourself once, renew yourself day after day; become new again and again." The announcement to K'ang says, "Make a new people."

Look at modern science: military weapons are modernized every day and are more novel every month. Although we call this progress, it is nothing more than progressive cruelty. Science takes human life as an experiment, as child's play. It fulfills its selfish desires through force and oppression.

Why shouldn't we think instead of washing clean the body and mind; of brushing away accumulated dirt; of developing a sense of shame; of painfully changing our

former wrongs to create a new life; of being unique and awesome people full of vitality; of doing beneficial deeds for the sake of all living beings in the Dharma Realm; of establishing virtue on behalf of our fellow citizens of the myriad nations; of establishing a model for all under heaven? Doing this is called representing heaven in proclaiming and teaching with kindness; and for the sake of the country, instructing the people with loyalty and filial piety.



Commentary:

Establish Good Governments

King Wen of the ancient House of Chou had such a government. He regarded the common citizens of the state as his own sons and daughters and it was his constant concern to provide for their well being. Such a leader differs from those of this age. Today there are heads of state who regard human life as a tool for the achievement of their own personal wiles or goals of the state, slaughtering, imprisoning and oppressing the people. But King Wen, while paternalistic, was not partial; he was just. Even in his time there were jails, but they were not like those of the present age with high walls of stone and steel. There is a saying, "King Wen drew the earth and made jails." If one had violated a law the King had a square drawn on the earth within which the prisoner was confined. No one thus imprisoned would leave until his sentence expired, because King Wen was not only fair but wise. He was a diviner of no small accomplishment and always knew the whereabouts of his citizens. Hence, he would tell his subjects not to move and, like obedient children, they were still. In such a way is good government established and justice dispensed.

Dispense with Greed

King Wen was first vassal to King Chou of the House of Yin. Although he was a feudal lord, the territories of King Wen covered two-thirds of the empire. Nonetheless he had not thought to displace his rightful sovereign.

Benefit Oneself in Benefitting Others

In the BOOK OF SONGS it says of King Wen:

He measured out his magic tower,
measured it and planned it;
The people built it in one day,
in just one day they made it.
He measured out and built the tower,
he said to them, "No rush."
And the people flocked like children.

The King is in his magic garden;
The does and bucks lie all about,
The sleek does and the white birds glisten.
The King is by the magic pond--
Ah! The leaping of the fishes.

The King made a magic garden, a spirit tower for himself and all the people. For the benefit of all, they willingly made it in a day.

On the other hand, an ancient ruler who is an example of someone who exclusively engaged in vile deeds is King Chou of Yin, the last ruler of that dynasty. Wicked and debauched, he was under the sway of one of his wives, Su Ta-chi, who had been possessed by the spirit of a fox. Of all the spirits who possess people, the fox spirit is most fierce. The fox essence is crafty, cunning, and cruel.

Su Ta-chi disliked the King's uncle, Pi Kan, who was a truly accomplished sage. Pi Kan was not only wise and learned, but possessed great virtue. It was just this virtue which frightened the fox spirit to plot his death. Pi Kan had served the empire well, and the common people revered and honored him. His popular support was such that to order his death would have outraged the people. The fox spirit nonetheless was determined. Knowing her husband, the King, to be a pragmatic man willing to experiment, she drew on popular knowledge and said, "Pi Kan is very clever and must be a sage. Certainly his heart has three hairs and seven holes." (In the heart of ordinary man there is one hair and one hole. When the hair moves it touches the hole and knowledge arises. It is the virtue of three hairs and seven holes that made the prime minister so wise.)

Not knowing whether his wife spoke truly or not, the King called his uncle and said, "You really are extremely clever, certainly your heart differs from that of ordinary men. Please lend it for inspection." Although Pi Kan was the King's uncle, he was still his subject and so could not refuse. Obediently he opened his chest, removed his heart, and gave it to the King.

Although he had no heart, he did not immediately die. At that time he recalled a letter which had been left with him by his friend, the great official and diviner Chiang T'ai Kung, with the instructions that it be opened only in the case of extreme danger to his life. Feeling that the time was indeed appropriate, he read the letter which said, "When your heart has been taken by the King, mount a horse and ride to the north gate. There you will find a seller of 'empty heart vegetable, (a hollow vegetable like a green pepper). Say to him, 'Sir, if vegetables have no heart they can live. If man

has none, can he?' If that vegetable vender tells you that man can live without a heart, you will go well. If not, you will die."

Pi Kan mounted his horse and rushed to the north gate where he encountered a greengrocer. "Old man," he said, "peppers can live without a heart. Can man?" "Of course not," came the reply. Thereupon Pi Kan, the good minister of Yin, fell dead. His heart, incidentally, was just as Su Ta-chi said it would be, with three hairs and seven holes.

So impressed was the King with Su Ta-chi that he gave her the title of Wise Wife and fell even more under her influence. One day they were travelling and saw a pregnant woman.

"She is carrying a son," said Su Ta-chi.

"How do you know?" asked the King.

"Never mind that," she said, "If you don't trust me, just look for yourself."

"Very well," said the last King of Yin, and summoned the woman, opening her belly with a sword to reveal the son. The corpses of both mother and child were tossed at the side of the road while the Wise Wife, the fox spirit, placed her husband even more under her spell.

It is also related in the BOOK OF HISTORY how the King and his wife stood on the balcony in the early spring watching two men working in the thawing waters. One, an old man, worked constantly and energetically, unaware of the cold. The other, a young lad, shivered in the icy waters.

"Strange," remarked King Chou.

"Not at all," said the Wise Wife. "The old man was conceived in his parents' youth when the vital principles were in full strength. Consequently his bones are full of marrow. That young one, on the other hand, was conceived in his parents' last years, when they were weak. His bones are almost empty."

King Chou scoffed.

"Take a look," she said with the air of a petulant woman. The King summoned the two workers and sliced the shin of each. True enough, the bone of the old man was full, and that of the young one was like a reed, almost empty.

Such was the conduct of the last King of the House of Yin who took the lives of the people to be his own playthings. It is just this disregard for the people, committing atrocities and offenses before heaven, which is the ruin of empires, the fall of nations, and the undoing of kings. Such a monarch is unfit to hold the mandate of heaven, and his past offenses persist in spite of death. It was in the face of such wrong-doing that the mandate of heaven ended for the House of Yin

and revolved to the House of Chou. The founder of that dynasty was a model for the rulers of all countries, for the good prince is truly one who turns back the light and inspects himself, who puts forth good government and dispenses justice, and for whom the people will come joyfully like children and in a single day build a magic tower.

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AN AUTHOR IN ANCIENT TIMES SAID, "I KNOW THAT MY PAST FAULTS WERE LEFT UNCORRECTED, YET I KNOW THAT IN THE FUTURE I MAY MEND MY WAYS. I KNOW THAT I HAVE NOT BEEN OFF THE PATH OF CONFUSION FOR VERY LONG, AND I AM AWARE OF TODAY'S RIGHTS AND YESTERDAY'S WRONGS." These lines are from T'ao Yuan Ming's prose poem, RETURN. T'ao Yuan Ming, or T'ao K'an, was a recluse who once obtained an official post in a nearby district. His salary was a good one, consisting of five pecks of rice a month, and his work was minimal. A month had passed in his new post when the time came for an official inspection. T'ao K'an, on realizing that he would have to ride out to the boundary of his district, and there kneel to greet the inspector, said, "I will not bend my waist for five pecks of rice." He gave up his position and returned to his cottage to cultivate chrysanthemums and write.

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"OF ALL BAD KARMA WHICH I HAVE DONE BASED ON BEGINNINGLESS GREED, HATRED AND STUPIDITY, COMMITTED BY BODY, MOUTH AND MIND, I NOW REPENT AND REFORM." Greed, hatred and delusion are found at the root of our actions, even those which seem to be motivated by selflessness, love and knowledge. Difficult to understand as this at first seems, it will be born out by sufficient inspection.

The body, mouth and mind are the vehicles which perform the actions motivated by the three poisons: greed, hatred and delusion. The body is capable of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. The mouth spews forth false speech, confused prattle, harsh speech, and slander. The mind governs body and mouth through greed, hatred and wrong views. These are called the ten paths of unwholesome conduct, and they constitute the greater part of our conduct. However, they can be transformed into their opposites by our efforts; this is called turning towards the good. To change is simply to repent. Repentance is no emotional outpouring, no futile regret over spilt milk. We regret, and we change, and that is all there is to it. One gradually learns to



"I know that my past faults were left
uncorrected,
Yet I know that in the future I may mend
my ways.
I know that I have not been off the path of
confusion for very long,
And I am aware of today's rights and yester-
day's wrongs."

stop doing all manner of bad and move towards all manner of good. This is the conduct of the superior person. It is very simply the way by which one begins to leave the confused and troubled state of an ordinary mortal to become a Buddha. It must be done not merely with words and superficial conduct but in the very depths of the mind and consciousness. Therefore, once we begin to put our daily lives in order, we find it necessary to seek out a good advisor. He remonstrates with us and teaches us the proper means of cultivation, and thus we eliminate the accumulated garbage in our minds, stop the deeply ingrained habits which continue to produce ever more garbage, and attain true freedom.

"OFFENSES ARISE FROM THE MIND; USE THE MIND TO REPENT. WHEN THE MIND IS FORGOTTEN, OFFENSES ARE NO MORE. MIND FORGOTTEN AND OFFENSES ERADICATED, BOTH ARE EMPTY. THIS IS CALLED TRUE REPENTANCE AND REFORM." The acts of the mind are greed, hatred, and stupidity. The mind wanders and reels about the universe of its own thought, planning, scheming, measuring and calculating. Like a monkey loosed in a grove of ripe fruit trees the mind clambers on everything grasping, pulling and making a general mess. This mad mind directs our daily activities of body and speech, hence all our offenses are ultimately derived from the mind. Everything, in fact, that has name and form, that is labelled and known as distinct from other things, is a product of the mind.

We must cut off offenses at the root. Thus, what we must reform is not merely our behavior but the very depths of our minds. We must take our petty realms of consciousness and expand them until we are capable of the great conduct of the superior person, capable of including all good deeds as well as bad ones. Reform is in the mind, not in the shallow surface layers of what we know as the thinking mind, but in the deep, hidden wellsprings of consciousness which can only be reached through great effort. When we reach such depths we pass well beyond the limitations of thinking and verbal constructs. This is what is meant by "MIND FORGOTTEN." It is important to understand that this does not imply a simple forgetfulness of our wrong deeds. Rather it is a total passage beyond all normal thought, through which we reach the very source, and there wash off the accumulated dust.

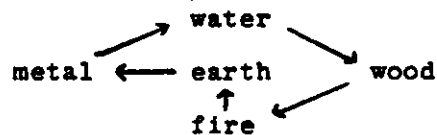
There are, ultimately, very few who need not listen to the words of the text, for, as it is said:

The sagely man has few errors;
The superior man changes his errors;
The petty man covers over errors;
The stupid man sees no errors.

* * *

MILITARY WEAPONS ARE MODERNIZED EVERY DAY AND MORE NOVEL EVERY MONTH. Wars began when one person hit another with his hand. Although it was not comfortable for either party, the general agreement was that it was a definitive way to deal with problems. The first weapons were bodies which belong to the element earth.

Later, a combatant picked up a stick and found that by wielding it skillfully, he could remain out of reach of his opponent, yet still inflict harm on him. With the invention of the club, the age of earth came to an end and the age of wood began. This is simply in line with the sequence of the elemental action. Each of the five elemental actors produces another, which in its turn is overcome by yet a different element. Wood is victorious over earth. The successive action of the elements may be arranged like this:



(arrows show cycle of production of elements)

Each element produces the one following it in a clockwise order, and is victorious over the next one in sequence. Thus earth produces metal and overcomes water, metal produces water and overcomes wood, water produces wood and overcomes fire, and so forth. This production and vanquishing of the five elemental actors is correlated to the changes of the seasons, to colors, compass points, and many other phenomena. From its profound study, we can understand many otherwise insoluble problems of nature and history.

So it was that metal was found to be malleable and an excellent substance for blades which could be fixed to wooden lances and thrown from afar. Warfare continued to evolve under the influence of metal. The limits of that element were reached when men totally encased themselves in armor so as to be protected from arrows and spears.

Next in line is fire. Fire overcomes metal. Gunpowder, which had existed as a plaything for years, was harnessed and made to send pellets of metal at great speed through the air to penetrate the suits of protective armor. Thus it came to pass that warfare raged under the influence of fire.

It seemed as though the end of military progress had been reached until the element water began its ascent. Fire is overcome by water, and thus the influence of water has grown ever heavier, and under it new weapons have emerged. The science of chemistry is under the dominion of water, and atomic energy, which utilizes water, is an outgrowth of chemical transformation. The influence of fire in warfare is still paramount, but that of water grows. As this happens what can be done?

If we add load after load of earth to a pool of water, we will make mud. Add more earth and we shall finally arrive at level and dry ground, soil in which we may plant and harvest, on which we may build. How do we accomplish this? We use what belongs to earth, use our bodies. With the body we can cultivate the ground, and step by step overcome the age of water and create dry land.

The Buddhadharma is of the earth. It is here, among living creatures in the world, that Dharma is taught and practiced, not elsewhere in some starry abstract heaven. Dharma is taught according to the needs of beings. Since we are here, Dharma appears here as it does. To the inhabitants of heavens, it appears in an appropriate form.

Now we are on the earth. Buddhism is of the earth, which is why it is represented by a tawny color, the color of earth. The Sixth Patriarch said,

The Buddhadharma is here in the world;
Enlightenment is not apart from the world.
To search for Bodhi apart from the world
Is like looking for a hare with horns.

The earth can be used for fighting, but it can also be used to cultivate.

The above paragraphs dealt with the defeat of the elements by one another; the order of their production also has great meaning for society. Yellow earth produces metal, whose color is white. On the surface of a metal mirror one may condense water, which in depth is black. Water nourishes and produces green wood, which when dry, puts forth crimson flames. Fires bakes blocks of clay into a new, durable, and useful kind of earth.

In the earth of Buddhadharma is forged a Vajra body, like metal but stronger. With the perfection of the Vajra body, the great depths of the waters of compassion may be fathomed. These waters nourish the tree of Bodhi, which grows and flourishes to bear its fruit and flowers. Its wood is able to support the heat of samadhi which fires the molded earth, burning out all impurity, and producing a pure and durable building material.

