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The sorting which  
evens things out

The last word in the title *Ch'i wu lun* is sometimes understood as 'discourse' ('The discourse on evening things out'), sometimes in its more basic sense of 'sort out (in coherent discourse)'. Comparison with the three-word titles of the other *Inner chapters* favours the latter alternative. *Lun*, 'sorting out', is the one kind of thinking always mentioned with approval in *Chuang-tzū*. Outside Taoism it suggests grading in superior and inferior categories, but *Chuang-tzū* detaches it from valuation, turns it into 'the sorting which evens things out'.

The theme of the chapter is the defence of a synthesising vision against Confucians, Mohists and Sophists, who analyse, distinguish alternatives and debate which is right or wrong. It contains the most philosophically acute passages in the *Inner chapters*, obscure, fragmented, but pervaded by the sensation, rare in ancient literatures, of a man jotting the living thought at the moment of its inception. It is a pity that the Syncretist who assembled the chapter seems to have been out of sympathy with these intellectual subtleties designed to discredit the intellect, for he has relegated a number of closely related passages to the *Mixed chapters* (pp. 101-8, 110f below).

Tzū-ch'i of Nan-kuo reclined elbow on armrest, looked up at the sky and exhaled, in a trance as though he had lost the counterpart of himself. Yen-ch'eng Tzū-yu stood in waiting before him.

'What is this?' he said. 'Can the frame really be made to be like withered wood, the heart like dead ashes? The reclining man here now is not the reclining man of yesterday.'

'You do well to ask that, Tzū-yu! This time I had lost my own self, did you know it? You hear the pipes of men, don't you, but not yet the pipes of earth, the pipes of earth but not yet the pipes of Heaven?'

'I venture to ask the secret of it.'

'That hugest of clumps of soil blows out breath, by name the "wind". Better if it were never to start up, for whenever it does ten thousand hollow places burst out howling, and don't tell me you have never heard how the hubbub swells! The recesses in mountain forests, the hollows that pit great trees a hundred spans round, are like nostrils, like mouths, like ears, like sockets, like bowls, like mortars, like pools, like puddles. Hooting, hissing,

sniffing, sucking, mumbling, moaning, whistling, wailing, the winds ahead sing out AAAH!, the winds behind answer EEEH!, breezes strike up a tiny chorus, the whirlwind a mighty chorus. When the gale has passed, all the hollows empty, and don't tell me you have never seen how the quivering slows and settles!'

'The pipes of earth, these are the various hollows; the pipes of men, these are rows of tubes. Let me ask about the pipes of Heaven.'

'Who is it that puffs out the myriads which are never the same, who in their self-ending is sealing them up, in their self-choosing is impelling the force into them?'

'Heaven turns circles, yes!

Earth sits firm, yes!

Sun and moon vie for a place, yes!

Whose is the bow that shoots them?

Whose is the net that holds them?

Who is it sits with nothing to do and gives them the push that sends them?'

'Shall we suppose, yes, that something triggers them off, then seals them away, and they have no choice?'

Or suppose, yes, that wheeling in their circuits they cannot stop themselves?'

Do the clouds make the rain?

Or the rain the clouds?

Whose bounty bestows them?'

Who is it sits with nothing to do as in ecstasy he urges them?'

'The winds rise in the north,

Blow west, blow east,

And now again whirl high above.

Who breathes them out, who breathes them in?'

Who is it sits with nothing to do and sweeps between and over them?'

NOTE *Chuang-tzū's* parable of the wind compares the conflicting utterances of philosophers to the different notes blown by the same breath in the long and short tubes of the pan-pipes, and the noises made by the wind in hollows of different shapes. It is natural for differently constituted persons to think differently; don't try to decide between their opinions, listen to Heaven who breathes through them.

The trance of Tzū-ch'i reappears in a *Mixed chapter* fragment (p. 105 below), where he speaks of a progressive objectivisation of successive selves from which he detaches himself. Here he has finally broken out of the dichotomy, losing both 'the counterpart of himself' and 'his own self'.

'That hugest of clumps of soil', a phrase peculiar to the *Inner chapters* (pp. 86-8 below), seems to conjure up an image of the universe so far in the distance that it is no bigger than a clod you could hold in your hand.

The poem which we identify as the conclusion of the dialogue survives only in one of the *Outer chapters*, the 'Circuits of Heaven' (chapter 14). But the Buddhist *Chih-t'an fu-hsing ch'uan-bung chüeh* (preface dated AD 766) cites it from the *Inner chapters* (*Taishō Tripitaka* No. 1912, p. 440C), from which it would have been

excised when *Chuang-tzū* was abridged, to avoid duplication. The fit is so neat that it can be located here with some confidence.

• • •  
 'Great wit is effortless,  
 Petty wit picks holes.  
 Great speech is flavourless,  
 Petty speech strings words.

'While it sleeps, the paths of souls cross:  
 When it wakes, the body opens.  
 Whatever we sense entangles it:  
 Each day we use that heart of ours for strife.'

The calm ones, the deep ones, the subtle ones.

'Petty fears intimidate,  
 The supreme fear calms.  
 It shoots like the trigger releasing the string on the notch',

referring to its manipulation of 'That's it, that's not'.

It ties us down as though by oath, by treaty',

referring to its commitment to the winning alternative.

'Its decline is like autumn and winter',

speaking of its daily deterioration. As it sinks, that which is the source of its deeds cannot be made to renew them.

'It clogs as though it were being sealed up',

speaking of its drying up in old age. As the heart nears death, nothing can make it revert to the Yang.

Pleasure in things and anger against them, sadness and joy, forethought and regret, change and immobility, idle influences that initiate our gestures – music coming out of emptiness, vapour condensing into mushrooms – alternate before it day and night and no one knows from what soil they spring. Enough! The source from which it has these morning and evening, is it not that from which it was born?

NOTE *Chuang-tzū* might be either the author or the annotator of these verses about

the heart, the organ of thought. The 'supreme fear' which calms would be the fear of death, reconciliation with which is *Chuang-tzū*'s central concern.

• • •  
 'Without an Other there is no Self, without Self no choosing one thing rather than another.'

This is somewhere near it, but we do not know in whose service they are being employed. It seems that there is something genuinely in command, and that the only trouble is we cannot find a sign of it. That as 'Way' it can be walked is true enough, but we do not see its shape; it has identity but no shape. Of the hundred joints, nine openings, six viscera all present and complete, which should I recognise as more kin to me than another? Are you people pleased with them all? Rather, you have a favourite organ among them. On your assumption, does it have the rest of them as its vassals and concubines? Are its vassals and concubines inadequate to rule each other? Isn't it rather that they take turns as each other's lord and vassals? Or rather than that, they have a genuine lord present in them. If we seek without success to grasp what its identity might be, that never either adds to nor detracts from its genuineness.

NOTE *Chuang-tzū* starts from a quotation or a provisional formulation of his own. His theme is again the heart, the organ of thought. Should it be allowed to take charge of our lives? Isn't it merely one of many organs each with its own functions within an order which comes from beyond us, from the Way?

• • •  
 Once we have received the completed body we are aware of it all the time we await extinction. Is it not sad how we and other things go on stroking or jostling each other, in a race ahead like a gallop which nothing can stop? How can we fail to regret that we labour all our lives without seeing success, wear ourselves out with toil in ignorance of where we shall end? What use is it for man to say that he will not die, since when the body dissolves the heart dissolves with it? How can we not call this our supreme regret? Is man's life really as stupid as this? Or is it that I am the only stupid one, and there are others not so stupid? But if you go by the completed heart and take it as your authority, who is without such an authority? Why should it be only the man who knows how things alternate and whose heart approves its own judgments who has such an authority? The fool has one just as he has. For there to be 'That's it, that's not' before they are formed in the heart would be to 'go to Yüeh today and have arrived yesterday'. This would be crediting with existence what has no existence; and if you do that even the daemonic Yü could not understand you, and how can you expect to be understood by me?

NOTE 'I go to Yüeh today but came yesterday' is a paradox of the Sophist Hui Shih (p. 283 below), here mentioned only for its absurdity.

Saying is not blowing breath, saying says something; the only trouble is that what it says is never fixed. Do we really say something? Or have we never said anything? If you think it different from the twitter of fledgelings, is there proof of the distinction? Or isn't there any proof? By what is the Way hidden, that there should be a genuine or a false? By what is saying darkened, that sometimes 'That's it' and sometimes 'That's not'? Wherever we walk how can the Way be absent? Whatever the standpoint how can saying be unallowable? The Way is hidden by formation of the lesser, saying is darkened by its foliage and flowers. And so we have the 'That's it, that's not' of Confucians and Mohists, by which what is *it* for one of them for the other is not, what is *not* for one of them for the other is. If you wish to affirm what they deny and deny what they affirm, the best means is Illumination.

No thing is not 'other', no thing is not 'it'. If you treat yourself too as 'other' they do not appear, if you know of yourself you know of them. Hence it is said:

“‘Other’ comes out from ‘it’, ‘it’ likewise goes by ‘other’”,

the opinion that 'it' and 'other' are born simultaneously. However,

'Simultaneously with being alive one dies',

and simultaneously with dying one is alive, simultaneously with being allowable something becomes unallowable and simultaneously with being unallowable it becomes allowable. If going by circumstance that's it then going by circumstance that's not, if going by circumstance that's not then going by circumstance that's it. This is why the sage does not take this course, but opens things up to the light of Heaven; his too is a 'That's it' which goes by circumstance.

NOTE In disputation if an object fits the name 'ox' one affirms with the demonstrative word *shih*, '(That) is it'; if it is something other than an ox one denies with a *fei*, '(That) is not'. Here Chuang-tzū tries to discredit disputation by the objection that at any moment of change both alternatives will be admissible. He appeals to a paradox of Hui Shih, 'The sun is simultaneously at noon and declining, a thing is simultaneously alive and dead' (p. 283 below), and generalises to the conclusion that any statement will remain inadmissible at the moment when it has just become admissible. It was also recognised in current disputation (as we find it in the Mohist *Canons*) that one can say both 'Y is long' (in relation to X) and 'Y is short' (in relation to Z), and that even with words such as 'black' and 'white' which are not comparative one has to decide whether to 'go by' (*yin*) the black parts or the white when deeming

someone a 'black man'. Chuang-tzū sees it as the lesson of disputation that one is entitled to affirm or deny anything of anything. He thinks of Confucians and Mohists who stick rigidly to their affirmations and denials as lighting up little areas of life and leaving the rest in darkness; the Illumination of the sage is a vision which brings everything to light.

What is It is also Other, what is Other is also It. There they say 'That's it, that's not' from one point of view, here we say 'That's it, that's not' from another point of view. Are there really It and Other? Or really no It and Other? Where neither It nor Other finds its opposite is called the axis of the Way. When once the axis is found at the centre of the circle there is no limit to responding with either, on the one hand no limit to what is *it*, on the other no limit to what is not. Therefore I say: 'The best means is Illumination.' Rather than use the meaning to show that

'The meaning is not the meaning',

use what is *not* the meaning. Rather than use a horse to show that

'A horse is not a horse'

use what is *not* a horse. Heaven and earth are the one meaning, the myriad things are the one horse.

NOTE There are extant essays by the Sophist Kung-sun Lung arguing that 'A white horse is not a horse' and 'When no thing is not the meaning the meaning is not the meaning'. Chuang-tzū thinks he was wasting his time; since all disputation starts from arbitrary acts of naming, he had only to pick something else as the meaning of the word, name something else 'horse', and then for him what the rest of us call a horse would not be a horse.

Allowable? – allowable. Unallowable? – unallowable. The Way comes about as we walk it; as for a thing, call it something and that's so. Why so? By being so. Why not so? By not being so. It is inherent in a thing that from somewhere that's so of it, from somewhere that's allowable of it; of no thing is it not so, of no thing is it unallowable. Therefore when a 'That's it' which deems picks out a stalk from a pillar, a hag from beautiful Hsi Shih, things however peculiar or incongruous, the Way interchanges them and deems them one. Their dividing is formation, their formation is dissolution; all things whether forming or dissolving in reverting interchange and are deemed to be one. Only the man who sees right through knows how to interchange and deem them one; the 'That's it' which deems he does not use, but

finds for them lodging-places in the usual. The 'usual' is the usable, the 'usable' is the interchangeable, to see as 'interchangeable' is to grasp; and once you grasp them you are almost there. The 'That's it' which goes by circumstance comes to an end; and when it is at an end, that of which you do not know what is so of it you call the 'Way'.

To wear out the daemonic-and-illuminated in you deeming them to be one without knowing that they are the same I call 'Three every morning'. What do I mean by 'Three every morning?' A monkey keeper handing out nuts said, 'Three every morning and four every evening.' The monkeys were all in a rage. 'All right then,' he said, 'four every morning and three every evening.' The monkeys were all delighted. Without anything being missed out either in name or in substance, their pleasure and anger were put to use; his too was the 'That's it' which goes by circumstance. This is why the sage smooths things out with his 'That's it, that's not', and stays at the point of rest on the potter's wheel of Heaven. It is this that is called 'Letting both alternatives proceed'.

NOTE 'The "That's it" which deems' (*wei shih*): in disputation over whether an object fits the name 'ox', the object is 'deemed' (*wei*) an ox by the judgement 'That's it' (*shih*). Chuang-tzū allows the flexible "'That's it" which goes by circumstance' (*yin shih*), but rejects absolutely the rigid "'That's it" which deems'.

'Letting both alternatives proceed': in disputation a decision to call an object 'X' 'proceeds' (*hsing*) to all objects of the same kind. But for Chuang-tzū one never loses the right to shift from one alternative to the other and allow either to 'proceed' from the instance to the kind.

The men of old, their knowledge had arrived at something: at what had it arrived? There were some who thought there had not yet begun to be things – the utmost, the exhaustive, there is no more to add. The next thought there were things but there had not yet begun to be borders. The next thought there were borders to them but there had not yet begun to be 'That's it, that's not'. The lighting up of 'That's it, that's not' is the reason why the Way is flawed. The reason why the Way is flawed is the reason why love becomes complete. Is anything really complete or flawed? Or is nothing really complete or flawed? To recognise as complete or flawed is to have as model the Chao when they play the zither; to recognise as neither complete nor flawed is to have as model the Chao when they don't play the zither. Chao Wen strumming on the zither, Music-master K'uang propped on his stick, Hui Shih leaning on the sterculia, had the three men's knowledge much farther to go? They were all men in whom it reached a culmination, and therefore was carried on to too late a time. It was only in being preferred by them that what they knew about differed from an Other; because they preferred it they wished to illumine it, but they illumined it without the

Other being illumined, and so the end of it all was the darkness of chop logic: and his own son too ended with only Chao Wen's zither string, and to the end of his life his musicianship was never completed. May men like this be said to be complete? Then so am I. Or may they not be said to be complete? Then neither am I, nor is anything else.

Therefore the glitter of glib implausibilities is despised by the sage. The 'That's it' which deems he does not use, but finds for things lodging-places in the usual. It is this that is meant by 'using Illumination'.

NOTE Systems of knowledge are partial and temporary like styles on the zither, which in forming sacrifice some of the potentialities of music, and by their very excellence make schools fossilise in decline. Take as model Chao Wen *not* playing the zither, not yet committed, with all his potentialities intact.

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'Now suppose that I speak of something, and do not know whether it is of a kind with the "it" in question or not of a kind. If what is of a kind and what is not are deemed of a kind with one another, there is no longer any difference from an "other".'

However, let's try to say it.

There is 'beginning', there is 'not yet having begun having a beginning'.

– There is 'there not yet having begun to be that "not yet having begun having a beginning"'

There is 'something', there is 'nothing'.

– There is 'not yet having begun being without something'.

– There is 'there not yet having begun to be that "not yet having begun being without something"'

All of a sudden 'there is nothing', and we do not yet know of something and nothing really which there is and which there is not. Now for my part I have already referred to something, but do not yet know whether my reference really referred to something or really did not refer to anything.

NOTE In this and the next passage Chuang-tzū criticises two supposed examples of describing in words the whole out of which things divide. He thinks that analysis always leaves an overlooked remainder, and that the whole cannot be recovered by putting the parts together again. According to the current logic, an object either is an ox or is not, so that having distinguished the alternatives we ought to be able to recover the totality by adding non-oxen to oxen. Chuang-tzū's refutation of this assumption is highly elliptical, and it is possible that he intends his effect of making the mind fly off in a new direction at every re-reading. But in Chinese as in other philosophy a gap in the argument which hinders understanding (as distinct from a flaw in an argument which we do understand) can generally be filled by exploring implicit questions and presuppositions in the background. Here Chuang-tzū is picking out points in common between oxen and non-oxen which distinguish them

both from a still remaining Other. In the first place both have a beginning, which excludes from them whatever preceded the beginning of things. Can we continue, by negating and adding, to incorporate this remainder into the totality? What preceded things is that in which they 'had not yet begun to have a beginning'. But in saying this retrospectively we speak as though things were somehow present before they began; we are driven to a further negation, 'There had not yet begun to be that "not yet having begun having a beginning"'.<sup>1</sup>

It is also common to oxen and non-oxen that they are 'something', what there is, in contrast with 'nothing', what there is not. As empty space nothingness is a measurable part of the cosmos; but can we not arrive at the totality by adding Nothing to Something? Here Chuang-tzū assumes a position far from obvious to a modern reader but implicit throughout early Taoist literature. There can be Nothing only when there is Something, a void only when there are objects with intervals between them, and both divide out from a whole which is neither one nor the other. Each thing has limited properties, is 'without something', but the whole out of which it differentiates is both 'without anything', since things have not yet emerged, and 'without nothing', since everything emerges from it. Then having added Nothing to Something, I have still to add a remainder which 'has not yet begun to be without something'. But again we are speaking retrospectively as though there were already things to be present or absent, and again we have to negate: 'There had not yet begun to be that "not yet having begun to be without something"'. Both Chuang-tzū's sequences are no doubt intended to lead to an infinite regress.

He concludes with the simpler point that as soon as we introduce Nothing as the remainder we contradict ourselves by saying 'There is' even of what there is not, Nothing.

. . .

'Nothing in the world is bigger than the tip of an autumn hair, and Mount T'ai is small; no one lives longer than a doomed child, and P'eng-tsu died young; heaven and earth were born together with me, and the myriad things and I are one.'

Now that we are one, can I still say something? Already having called us one, did I succeed in not saying something? One and the saying makes two, two and one make three. Proceeding from here even an expert calculator cannot get to the end of it, much less a plain man. Therefore if we take the step from nothing to something we arrive at three, and how much worse if we take the step from something to something! Take no step at all, and the 'That's it' which goes by circumstance will come to an end.

NOTE Hui Shih had said that 'Heaven and earth are one unit' (p. 284 below). At first sight one might expect Chuang-tzū to agree with that at least. But to refuse to distinguish alternatives is to refuse to affirm even 'Everything is one' against 'Things are many'. He observes that in saying it the statement itself is additional to the One which it is about, so that already there are two (Plato makes a similar point about the One and its name in *The Sophist*). It may be noticed that Chuang-tzū never does say that everything is one (except as one side of a paradox (p. 77)), always speaks subjectively of the sage treating as one.

The Way has never had borders, saying has never had norms. It is by a 'That's it' which deems that a boundary is marked. Let me say something about the marking of boundaries. You can locate as there and enclose by a line, sort out and assess, divide up and discriminate between alternatives, compete over and fight over: these I call our Eight Powers. What is outside the cosmos the sage locates as there but does not sort out. What is within the cosmos the sage sorts out but does not assess. The records of the former kings in the successive reigns in the Annals the sage assesses, but he does not argue over alternatives.

To 'divide', then, is to leave something undivided: to 'discriminate between alternatives' is to leave something which is neither alternative. 'What?' you ask. The sage keeps it in his breast, common men argue over alternatives to show it to each other. Hence I say: 'To "discriminate between alternatives"' is to fail to see something'.

. . .

The greatest Way is not cited as an authority,  
The greatest discrimination is unspoken,  
The greatest goodwill is cruel,  
The greatest honesty does not make itself awkward,  
The greatest courage does not spoil for a fight.

When the Way is lit it does not guide,  
When speech discriminates it fails to get there,  
Goodwill too constant is at someone's expense,  
Honesty too clean is not to be trusted,  
Courage that spoils for a fight is immature.

These five in having their corners rounded off come close to pointing the direction. Hence to know how to stay within the sphere of our ignorance is to attain the highest. Who knows an unspoken discrimination, an untold Way? It is this, if any is able to know it, which is called the Treasury of Heaven. Pour into it and it does not fill, bale out from it and it is not drained, and you do not know from what source it comes. It is this that is called our Benetnash Star.

NOTE 'Benetnash Star': The standard text has the obscure *Pao kuang* ('Shaded light'(?)), but there is a plausible variant, *Yao-kuang*, 'Benetnash', the star at the far end of the handle of the Dipper. The Dipper by turning its handle up, down, east and west, marks the progress of the four seasons (cf. Joseph Needham, *Science and civilization in China*, 3/250). As a metaphor for the prime mover of things Chuang-tzū chooses not the stationary North Star but the circumpolar star which initiates the cyclic motions.

Therefore formerly Yao asked Shun

'I wish to smite Tsung, K'uai and Hsü-ao. Why is it that I am not at ease on the south-facing throne?'

'Why be uneasy', said Shun, 'if these three still survive among the weeds? Formerly ten suns rose side by side and the myriad things were all illumined, and how much more by a man in whom the Power is brighter than the sun!'

NOTE This story seems out of place. Perhaps it was intended as an illustration of 'This is why the sage does not take this course but opens things up to the light of Heaven' (p. 52 above).

Gaptooth put a question to Wang Ni.

'Would you *know* something of which all things agreed "That's it"?'

'How would I know that?'

'Would you know what you did not know?'

'How would I know that?'

'Then does no thing know anything?'

'How would I know that? However, let me try to say it - "How do I know that what I call knowing is not ignorance? How do I know that what I call ignorance is not knowing?"'

'Moreover, let me try a question on you. When a human sleeps in the damp his waist hurts and he gets stiff in the joints; is that so of the loach? When he sits in a tree he shivers and shakes; is that so of the ape? Which of these three knows the right place to live? Humans eat the flesh of hay-fed and grain-fed beasts, deer eat the grass, centipedes relish snakes, owls and crows crave mice; which of the four has a proper sense of taste? Gibbons are sought by baboons as mates, elaphures like the company of deer, loaches play with fish. Mao-ch'iang and Lady Li were beautiful in the eyes of men; but when the fish saw them they plunged deep, when the birds saw them they flew high, when the deer saw them they broke into a run. Which of these four knows what is truly beautiful in the world? In my judgement the principles of Goodwill and Duty, the paths of "That's it, that's not", are inextricably confused; how could I know how to discriminate between them?'

'If you do not know benefit from harm, would you deny that the utmost man knows benefit from harm?'

'The utmost man is daemonic. When the wide woodlands blaze they cannot sear him, when the Yellow River and the Han freeze they cannot chill him, when swift thunderbolts smash the mountains and whirlwinds shake the seas they cannot startle him. A man like that yokes the clouds to his chariot, rides the sun and moon and roams beyond the four seas; death and life alter nothing in himself, still less the principles of benefit and harm!'

NOTE In the opening exchange Gaptooth is pressing for an admission that there

must be something which is knowable: (1) Would you know something which everyone agrees on? Wang Ni denies it, perhaps because there could be no independent viewpoint from which to judge a universally shared opinion. (2) Then at least one knows what one does not know. But that is a contradiction, or so Chuang-tzū thinks (like Meno in Plato's dialogue); the Mohist *Canon* B 48 discusses this problem, and points out that one can know something by name without knowing what objects fit the name. (3) Then one knows that no one knows anything - another contradiction.

Ch'ü-ch'üeh-tzū asked Ch'ang-wu-tzū

'I heard this from the Master: "The sage does not work for any goal, does not lean towards benefit or shun harm, does not delight in seeking, does not fix a route by a Way, in saying nothing says something and in saying something says nothing, and roams beyond the dust and grime." The Master thought of the saying as a flight of fancy, but to me it seemed the walking of the most esoteric Way. How does it seem to you?'

'This is a saying which would have puzzled the Yellow Emperor, and what would old Confucius know about it? Moreover you for your part are counting your winnings much too soon; at the sight of the egg you expect the cock-crow, at the sight of the bow you expect a roasted owl. Suppose I put it to you in abandoned words, and you listen with the same abandon:

"Go side by side with the sun and moon,  
Do the rounds of Space and Time.  
Act out their neat conjunctions,  
Stay aloof from their convulsions.  
Dependents each on each, let us honour one another.  
Common people fuss and fret,  
The sage is a dullard and a sluggard.  
Be aligned along a myriad years, in oneness,  
wholeness, simplicity.  
All the myriad things are as they are,  
And as what they are make up totality."

How do I know that to take pleasure in life is not a delusion? How do I know that we who hate death are not exiles since childhood who have forgotten the way home? Lady Li was the daughter of a frontier guard at Ai. When the kingdom of Chin first took her the tears stained her dress; only when she came to the palace and shared the King's square couch and ate the flesh of hay-fed and grain-fed beasts did she begin to regret her tears. How do I know that the dead do not regret that ever they had an urge to life? Who banquets in a dream at dawn wails and weeps, who wails and weeps in a dream at dawn goes out to hunt. While we dream we do not know that we are dreaming, and in the middle of a dream interpret a dream within it; not until we wake do we

know that we were dreaming. Only at the ultimate awakening shall we know that this is the ultimate dream. Yet fools think they are awake, so confident that they know what they are, princes, herdsmen, incorrigible! You and Confucius are both dreams, and I who call you a dream am also a dream. This saying of his, the name for it is 'a flight into the extraordinary'; if it happens once in ten thousand ages that a great sage knows its explanation it will have happened as though between morning and evening.'

You and I having been made to argue over alternatives, if it is you not I that wins, is it really you who are on to it, I who am not? If it is I not you that wins, is it really I who am on to it, you who are not? Is one of us on to it and the other of us not? Or are both of us on to it and both of us not? If you and I are unable to know where we stand, others will surely be in the dark because of us. Whom shall I call in to decide it? If I get someone of your party to decide it, being already of your party how can he decide it? If I get someone of my party to decide it, being already of my party how can he decide it? If I get someone of a party different from either of us to decide it, being already of a party different from either of us how can he decide it? If I get someone of the same party as both of us to decide it, being already of the same party as both of us how can he decide it? Consequently you and I and he are all unable to know where we stand, and shall we find someone else to depend on?

It makes no difference whether the voices in their transformations have each other to depend on or not. Smooth them out on the whetstone of Heaven, use them to go by and let the stream find its own channels; this is the way to live out your years. Forget the years, forget duty, be shaken into motion by the limitless, and so find things their lodging-places in the limitless.

What is meant by 'Smooth them out on the whetstone of Heaven'? Treat as 'it' even what is not, treat as 'so' even what is not. If the 'it' is really it, there is no longer a difference for disputation from what is not it; if the 'so' is really so, there is no longer a difference for disputation from what is not so.

NOTE Since anything may at one time or another be picked out as 'it', if it were really the name of something (in Western grammatical terms, if it were not a pronoun but a noun) it would be the name of everything. Chuang-tzū likes the thought that instead of selecting and approving something as 'it' one may use the word to embrace and approve everything, to say 'Yes!' to the universe; we find him doing so in p. 102 below.

The penumbra asked the shadow:

'Just then you were walking, now you stop; just then you were sitting

now you stand. Why don't you make up your mind to do one thing or the other?'

'Is it that there is something on which I depend to be so? And does what I depend on too depend on something else to be so? Would it be that I depend on snake's scales, cicada's wings? How would I recognise why it is so, how would I recognise why it is not so?'

Last night Chuang Chou dreamed he was a butterfly, spirits soaring he was a butterfly (is it that in showing what he was he suited his own fancy?), and did not know about Chou. When all of a sudden he awoke, he was Chou with all his wits about him. He does not know whether he is Chou who dreams he is a butterfly or a butterfly who dreams he is Chou. Between Chou and the butterfly there was necessarily a dividing; just this is what is meant by the transformations of things.

NOTE 'Showing what he was' seems to connect with the earlier reference to 'showing' that a horse is not a horse (p. 53 above). If so, the point is that the Taoist does not permanently deem himself a man or a butterfly but moves spontaneously from fitting one name to fitting another. cf. 'At one moment he deemed himself the logician's "horse", at another his "ox"' (p. 94 below).