

# The True Controller



The True Controller is fathomless and obscure, neither image nor material form. Though undifferentiated, turbid, and profound, it contains all the permutations of *qi*-energy.<sup>1</sup> *Qi*-energy divided into yin and yang forces, and numbers issued forth marking beginnings and ends.<sup>2</sup> Heaven swirled about and earth congealed as these two spaces became fixed in their proper positions. Then, mankind and all other things were born.<sup>3</sup> Man possesses within himself a fundamental, placid harmony resembling the relationship between heaven and earth. He is pervaded by a blend of vigorous essence and spirit, which do not conflict with each other.<sup>4</sup> The *qi*-energy of heaven became the ethereal *hun*-soul; the *qi*-energy of earth became the earthly *po*-soul.<sup>5</sup> When a person's *qi*-energy is pure, the *po*-soul follows the *hun*-soul. When *qi*-energy is impure, the *hun*-soul follows the *po*-soul. Following the *hun*-soul leads to nobility; following the *po*-soul results in lowliness. A pure *hun*-soul is worthy; an impure *po*-soul is stupid. These are the thresholds to longevity or a short life, good fortune or disaster.<sup>6</sup> There is nobility and worthiness, lowliness and stupidity, longevity and good fortune, short life and disaster. There is also nobility yet stupidity, lowliness yet worthiness, longevity yet disaster, short life yet good fortune. The transformations of this world are inconsistent, but their tendencies can be discerned from early signs. The *hun*-soul can know the future, the *po*-soul can conceal the past.<sup>7</sup> When men awake in the morning, their *hun*-soul becomes active in their eyes. When they fall asleep at night, their *po*-soul reposes in their livers. When the *hun*-soul hovers in the eyes, one can see things. While the *po*-soul reposes in the liver, one can dream. Dreaming is spirit-wandering and a mirror for knowing the future.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is said that when the spirit

makes contact, dreams result, and when the body encounters things, events occur.<sup>9</sup>

## NOTES

1. There seems to be a True Controller, but it is impossible to apprehend its appearance. According to Master Guangcheng, the absolute Way is fathomless and obscure. (From the *Master Zhuang*.) In antiquity, before there was heaven and earth, everything was fathomless and obscure, confused and murky, undifferentiated and empty, so that there was no gateway into it. (From the *Master of Huainan*.)

2. When the Great Ultimate moved, it gave birth to yang; when it became quiet, it gave birth to yin. (Master Zhou Dunyi.) The Great Generation occurred before *qi*-energy appeared. It lacked any form or definite borders, but then it transformed and became oneness. One transformed and became seven; seven transformed and became nine. “Nine” [*jiu*] is a homophone for “finality” [*jiu*], so when nine transforms, it becomes one again. (From the *Master Lie*.) Oneness gave birth to two, two to three, and three gave birth to the myriad things. The myriad things carry yin and embrace yang. (From the *Laozi*.)

3. Heaven revolved while earth stood still as everything kept spinning about without diminishing. (From the *Master of Huainan*.) Heaven and earth were born of primal *qi*-energy and are the ancestors of all things. (From *A Summary of Ritual*.)

4. When *qi*-energy formed a harmonious blend, it became mankind. (From the *Master Lie*.) Man’s vigorous essence and spirit flow together with the movements of heaven and earth. This is the basis on which dream interpretation was established. (From a commentary to *The Poems of Wang Jiefu*.)

5. Heaven in us takes the form of virtuous power while earth in us takes the form of *qi*-energy. Life occurs when virtuous power flows and *qi* blends with it. Thus, the arrival of life is called “vigorous essence.” The interaction of the two kinds of vigorous essence is called “spirit.” What accompanies the spirit as it comes and goes is called the “*hun*-soul” and what enters and exits along with the vigorous essence is called the “*po*-soul.” (From *The Book of the Spiritual Pivot*.) What is called the “*po*-soul” is the initial transformation when something first obtains life. After birth, the yang part of the *po*-soul is called the “*hun*-soul.” (Zichan of Zheng.) Vigorous essence and spirit are apportioned by heaven and the components of the body are apportioned by earth. What belongs to heaven is pure and disperses; what belongs to earth is impure and coagulates. (From the *Master Lie*.) The *hun*-soul rules the emotions and the *po*-soul rules the inherent nature. (From *Discussions in the White Tiger Hall*.) The *hun*-soul is the yang spirit of a person and the *po*-soul is the yin spirit of a person. (Gao You.) What man breathes in and out is *qi*-energy. The sensory perceptions of the eyes and ears comprise the *po*-soul. When these become *qi*-energy, it is called the “*hun*-soul.” (Zheng Xuan.) The *hun*-soul is governed by the agent “wood,” and the *po*-soul is governed by the agent “metal.” That is why one speaks of the three *hun*-souls

and the seven *po*-souls, for these are the numbers of the agents “metal” and “wood” respectively. (Zhu Xi.)

6. A numinous *hun*-soul is worthy; a wicked *po*-soul is stupid. A light *hun*-soul is bright; a heavy *po*-soul is dark. Feathers elevate the *hun*-soul; hair weighs down the *po*-soul. (From *A Record of Textual Studies*.)

7. When the *hun*-soul is strong, one is adept at achieving a profound understanding and when the *po*-soul is strong, one is adept at remembering things. The sage uses his *po*-soul to take charge of his *hun*-soul while ordinary people use their *hun*-soul to direct their *po*-soul.

8. Whatever enters into the vigorous essence and spirit can flow and connect with heaven, earth, yin, and yang. Therefore, during daytime activities and nighttime dreams, good, evil, auspicious, and inauspicious events all occur according to their categorical natures. (Zhu Xi.) It is the reflector of heaven and earth and a mirror of the myriad things. (From the *Master Zhuang*.)

9. When the spirit makes contact, dreams result and when the body encounters things, events occur. Thus, we think during the day and dream at night as body and spirit encounter things. When the spirit congeals, thoughts and dreams dissipate on their own. (From the *Master Lie*.) The *hun*-soul interacts with others during sleep; the body is animated when awake. (From the *Master Zhuang*.)