

Internal Chapter 1

Transcendent Bliss

The remote Arctic was a dark and unfathomable place, where there was little light available all the year round, so the sky there was dark, the land there was dark and the waters there were just as dark. Therefore, the waters there were usually called the North Darkness, or the North Sea. There lived in the North Sea a fish named Tak'un. It was so excessively gigantic that no one knew how many thousand miles its body could stretch. Through natural evolution, Tak'un became a big bird called Tap'eng. It was likewise so excessively gigantic that no one knew how many thousand miles its back could extend. Every time when the bird strived to fly high up into the sky, its wings looked like a huge black cloud that could cover up both the sky and the sun. During the season when the ocean was still and quiet, it usually drifted about the sea, whereas when the strong winds and tides formed on the sea fluctuated violently in proper order, it rose high up into the sky with the aid of those winds and tides and migrated to the South Darkness. The South Darkness was located in the Antarctic far away. The Antarctic was likewise a dark and unfathomable place where there was little light available all the year round, so the sky there was dark, the land there was dark and the waters were just as dark. The waters there were called the South Darkness, or the South Sea, which was a huge Heavenly Pond.

Ch'i Hsieh (a collection of ancient Chinese fairy tales) is a book specifically recording anecdotes and intriguing stories. According to *Ch'i Hsieh*, "When Tap'eng migrated to the South Darkness, it had to wrestle with the mammoth rolling tides with both of its wings, splashing ocean waves up to three thousand miles around, and then spiraled straight up to the altitude of some ninety thousand miles along the skyrocketing airstream generated by those waves. On the way from the North Sea to the South Sea, Tap'eng could feed on nothing other than the ascending breaths generated by all living things when they breathed in summer."

The water vapor that drifted about the vast fields and the dust that floated around the air were simply the breaths generated by all living things when they breathed. They could bring about the ascending airstream in the circular operation of atmosphere, which was the very source of the driving force on which Tap'eng could rely to arrive smoothly in the South Sea. When Tap'eng looked up, it felt that the sky was all in blue. Was the sky really all in blue? No! It looked all in blue just because it was so distant that Tap'eng could not see its margins with its naked eyes. When Dap'eng looked down, it felt that the earth was just as all in blue as was the sky!

You see, if the water that gathers is not deep enough, then it will not generate buoyancy enough to support the weight of the large vessel. However, if we pour a glass of water into the pit of the ground in the lobby, then a small grass can sail the water like a small boat. But if we put the glass in that puddle, then it cannot move at all as if it were stuck with glue. This is because the water that gathers is not deep enough and the "boat" is indeed too big in size. Similarly, when the ascending airstream that gathered at a low altitude was not strong enough, it would not generate lift enough to bolster the heavy wings of the big bird. So it was only at the altitude of ninety thousand miles that the ascending airstream that gathered there could become strong enough. Therefore, Tap'eng had to fly up to that altitude along with the ascending airstream just below its body before it could fly southward by taking the ascending airstream. Only by so doing could Tap'eng carry the vast sky on the back with nothing in his way and then fly smoothly to the South Sea.

Having heard that Tap'eng had been flying to the South Sea, the cicada and the bullfinch began to sneer at him and said, "I spread my wings rapidly to fly far away, but I have to stop for a rest when flying over elm trees and sandalwood trees and perch on the branches of those trees below; but it is often the case that before I get there, I fall down to the ground and that's all. Is it necessary for Tap'eng to take the trouble to fly up to the altitude of ninety thousand miles and fly southward?" To go to the wilderness, it will do for a round trip if I carry three meals with me and I will not be hungry on the way; to go somewhere a hundred miles away, it will take me a night to pound grain in a mortar (*i.e.* a traditional way of preparing food in China); to go somewhere a thousand miles away, it will take me three months to accumulate food. How much did the two little things know about Tap'eng's having been flying to the South Sea?