

莊子養生主: 庖丁解牛

庖丁為文惠君解牛，手之所觸，肩之所倚，足之所履，膝之所踣，砉然騞然，奏刀騞然，莫不中音。合於《桑林》之舞，乃中《經首》之會。

文惠君曰：“嘻！善哉！技蓋至此乎？”

庖丁釋刀對曰：“臣之所好者道也，進乎技矣。始臣之解牛之時，所見無非牛者。三年之後，未嘗見全牛也。方今之時，臣以神遇，而不以目視，官知止而神欲行。依乎天理，批大郤，道大窾，因其固然。技經肯綮之未嘗，而況大軀乎！良庖歲更刀，割也；族庖月更刀，折也。今臣之刀十九年矣，所解數千牛矣，而刀刃若新發於硎。彼節者有間，而刀刃者無厚，以無厚入有間，恢恢乎其於遊刃必有餘地矣，是以十九年而刀刃若新發於硎。雖然，每至於族，吾見其難為，怵然為戒，視為止，行為遲。動刀甚微，謦然已解，如土委地。提刀而立，為之四顧，為之躊躇滿志，善刀而藏之”。

文惠君曰：“善哉！吾聞庖丁之言，得養生焉。”

Nourishing the Lord of Life: A Cook Dissects His Oxen

Alternative title: “Use the force”

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Ruler Wen Hui’s cook dissected an ox for him. Wherever his hands touched, his shoulders leaned, his feet landed, his knees pressed, the separation between skin and bones became audible; it became more so when the knife entered the ox. The sounds were all in cadence, resembling classical dance and rhythm.

Ruler Wen Hui said, “Ah, Excellent! How did you manage to perfect your technique like that?”

The cook laid down his knife and replied, “What your servant studies is Dao (the way), which goes beyond techniques. When I started, all I saw was the ox. Three years later, I ceased to see the ox as a whole. Now I no longer use my eyes; all I use is my spirit. My senses know when to stop and my spirit drives the operation. By observing the force of nature, I run my knife through crevices and cavities as that is the only way. My knife does not have to confront membranes and ligaments, let alone bones. Good cooks normally change knives yearly, as they are used for cutting. Average cooks normally change knives monthly, as they are used for chopping. I have been using my knife for nineteen years. I have dissected thousands of oxen, yet its blade remains as new. Interstices exist between all joints, while the blade has little thickness. There is plenty of room to manoeuvre the thin blade between the interstices. That explains why my knife is as new after nineteen years. Nevertheless, whenever I encounter a complicated joint, I shall proceed in alert; I shall abandon my vision and my movements will slow down. The slightest movement would be sufficient to separate the joint, as naturally as soil falling down. I shall then stand up with my knife, look around, fill myself with satisfaction, carefully clean my knife and put it back.”

Ruler Wen Hui said, “Excellent! My cook’s words have nourished my life.”