

【水鏡回天錄白話解】

## 袁了凡居士

REFLECTIONS IN THE WATER-MIRROR: TURNING THE TIDE OF DESTINY

## LAYMAN YUAN LIAO FAN

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姓袁名黃。字坤儀。號學海。明江蘇吳江人。博學多才。於音樂。數理。水利。軍事等學。均有造詣。青年時妄信相士之言。命數註定。聽其自然發展。於是遊山玩水。與人無爭。行至棲霞。遇雲谷禪師開示義理。「趨吉避凶」之意。反妄歸真。篤行善事。改造命運。前相士之預言。「五十三歲八月十四日丑時壽終正寢。難登科無嗣」。皆不應驗。所行善事。請當時大德為其迴向。後中進士。並生子天賜及天啓。享年七十有四。著四訓行世。四訓者。即立命之學。改過之法。積善之方。謙德之效。實為千古之佳訓也。

今天講的是袁了凡居士，這位居士很愚癡的，為什麼呢？他信命運。為什麼他信命運呢？因為他被江湖的術士所迷，所以他就信命運。因為他父親早喪，母親叫他習學醫術，說醫生又可養生、又可以濟世活人；所以能維持自己的生活，又可以救旁人的生命，是很好的一個事情，所以他就學醫。

Text:

Layman Yuan Liao Fan's first name was Huang, his literary name was Kun Yi, and he was also known as Xue Hai. A native of Wujiang in Jiangsu of Ming Dynasty, he was erudite and talented, with high attainments in the fields of music, mathematics and sciences, irrigation works, military affairs and the like. At a young age, he imprudently believed in the words of a physiognomist that his fate was predestined. He thus let fate run its course. Accordingly he roamed about the mountains and rivers to enjoy the landscape, and he did not contend with anyone. When he traveled to Qi Xia Mountain, he came across Dhyana Master Yun Gu who gave him an instructional talk on principles and the import of pursuing good fortune and avoiding that which brings calamity. He subsequently renounced his wrong ideas and returned to the truth, and sincerely did good deeds to transform his destiny. The physiognomist's former predictions—that he would pass away on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month at the period of Chou (the period from 1 to 3 a.m.) at the age of 53, that it would be difficult for him to succeed in the imperial examinations, and that he would have no descendants—did not come true. He requested the greatly virtuous ones of that time to transfer the merit of his good deeds. Later he became a jin shi—a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations, and further begot two sons, Tian Ci (Bestowment of Heaven) and Tian Qi (Inspiration of Heaven) respectively. He died at the age of seventy four, leaving behind a work called The Four Teachings that was circulated in the country. The Four Teachings consist of the study of creating one's own life, the method of correcting one's faults, the way of accruing goodness, and the efficacy of modesty. From then on it became the family instruction through the ages.

Commentary:



他是明朝江蘇吳江人。名叫袁黃，大約取名字的時候，他的母親怕他做黃袁醫生；所以就給他取個名字叫「袁黃」，做一個好的醫生。字呢？叫坤儀；就是可以做乾坤的儀表。他的號叫學海，要學海那麼大量。他年少時很聰明，也可說很愚癡。怎麼說呢？他讀書很快，一讀就會了，所以這可以說聰明；可是他沒有真知卓見，遇著一個江湖的術士——就是相面先生，一說，他就相信這個命運。這江湖術士姓孔，這個人鶴髮童顏，頭髮都白了，面目像小孩子，有一股仙風道骨的樣子。他那個鬍子也特別長的，脩髯，就鬍子很長的。一看見他，就對他說了：「子爲仕路之人。」說，你應該是做官的，可是你做不了大官，只做一個縣官。大官你做不了，所以你應該讀書；這樣，他就「棄醫學儒」——不學醫，就學儒了。又說，你這一生在某年某月某日，你可以中秀才，中第十四名。連中多少名都給他批出來了。那麼給他批完了，又說，你能活到五十三歲，八月十四那一天就死了，壽終正寢。可是你沒有兒子，你只做一個縣官而已，不能再做大了！這是你一生的命運。

他以後一體驗，絲毫不錯！批他哪一年哪一月哪一日中秀才，都是絲毫不錯的。所以他這樣一體驗都應驗了，那麼他就處之泰然了，就沒有貪心了。這個時候他認爲：哦！我的命運安排註定了，那麼就什麼也不求了、也不貪了！他真不貪、不求、不自私、不自利了，也不打妄語了，真是實行這個「六大宗旨」。

那麼這樣子，他就幹什麼呢？他也不能總是沒有事情做，就各處遊山玩水，名山大川他都到了。這麼遊來遊去，就游到南京棲霞山。當時棲霞山有一位雲谷禪師，這雲谷禪師是當時的一個很有名望的一位高僧。他到那個地方，雲谷禪師就給他一個蒲團，兩個人就對面坐著，來打坐。

一坐，他就坐在那兒也不動彈了，也能

Today we talk about Layman Yuan Liao Fan. This layman was very foolish. Why? He believed in and resigned himself to fate. Why did he believe in and resign himself to fate? He was confused by an itinerant physiognomist and thus resigned himself to his fate. Since his father died an early death, his mother asked him to study and practice medicine, saying that doctors could make a living and further help the world and save lives. Being able to support oneself and save the lives of those around one was indeed a very good thing. Therefore, he studied medicine.

He lived during the Ming Dynasty and was from Wujiang of the Jiangsu Province. His name was Yuan Huang. Presumably when he was to be given a name, his mother was worried that he would become Huang Yuan doctor—a quack doctor. Therefore she gave him the name Yuan Huang, hoping that he would become a good doctor. His literary name was Kun Yi—*kun* being the earth and *yi* being deportment, meaning he could become a role model of heaven and earth. His alias was Xue Hai—to Emulate the Sea, meaning he would emulate the vastness of the sea. When he was young, he was very intelligent and yet very foolish. Why so? Once he studied the books he learned very fast and grasped [the principles] immediately; thus he was very intelligent. Nevertheless he did not have genuine wisdom and proper views. When he met an itinerant physiognomist, he came to believe in his fate. This itinerant physiognomist had the surname Kong. He had a ruddy, child-like complexion but white hair, which gave him the ethereal appearance of an immortal. His beard was also particularly long. When he saw Yuan Liao Fan, he told him, “You are someone on the path to becoming an official. You are meant to be an official. But you will not be a great official; you will only be a county magistrate. You should study the classics.” He thus abandoned his studies of medicine and instead studied the Confucian classics. “You will become a *xin cai* (one who passed the imperial examination at the county level) on a certain day of a certain month in a certain year, and your rank will be the 14<sup>th</sup>.” He could even foretell his rank as a *xin cai*. He continued telling him, “You will live to the age of 53, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month, your life will come to an end. However, you will have no son. You can only be a county magistrate and cannot accomplish anything greater than that. This is the destiny of your entire life.”

His later experience validated the predictions as not being off by the slightest bit. He was predicted to attain the rank of *xin cai* on a certain date—and it turned out to be true. The predictions were fulfilled. Accordingly he took things calmly and remained unruffled; he had no more greed. At this time, he thought, “Oh, my fate has been predestined so I don’t have to seek for anything.” He truly



入定了。因為他沒有妄想了，所以坐在那兒，也就很定的。啊！也不搖、也不晃，也不睜開眼睛、也不東張西望的，坐得像老僧入定似的。這麼一坐，坐了三天，雲谷禪師啊！矍然而起，說：「喔！你真是了不起！你在什麼地方學的功夫這麼好？我和你對坐了三天了，你一個妄想心都沒有打！你真是一個出乎其類、拔乎其萃的人！你都跟誰學的？」他說：「喔！我知道這命運是一定的，所以我不去貪求了，一切早就註定安排好了！」雲谷禪師一聽他這麼樣一講說：「哦！我以為你是一個出乎其類、拔乎其萃的非常人，是一個大丈夫。原來你呀——還是個凡夫俗子！」

這回把袁了凡這個好奇的心給衝動起來了：「啊？命運不是一定的嗎？命可以逃避嗎？」雲谷禪師就說：「命運不可逃避？你這數十年哪！我看被命運把你捆得結結實實的，你一點也沒超出你的命運。你不是凡夫俗子，是什麼呢？」又說：「你是個讀書的人，應該知道〈易經〉上講的『趨吉避凶』的道理。又儒教講：『積善之家必有余慶，積不善之家必有余殃。』命運如果不能避免的話，為什麼要趨吉避凶呢？」這麼一說，他豁然懂了，說：「那我要怎麼辦呢？」雲谷禪師說：「你要諸惡不作，眾善奉行啊！」那麼他就在這兒改頭換面，甚至於把五臟都換了——心肝脾肺腎都洗乾淨了；從此就諸惡不作，眾善奉行。

那麼這一做，怎麼樣呢？孔公以前給他相面批的這個命都不靈了、都不應驗了！他知道這個命是可以自己創造了。我們一般人都信命運，這個命運都不是一定的。毛澤東的命運，本來是可以做個很好的主席；可是他以後就糊塗了，就把運弄壞了。那麼，君子有造命之學，命由我立，福自己求，禍福無門，唯人自招——這都是自己招來的這個命運啊！大的

had no greed, did not seek, did not pursue personal advantage and was not selfish. He also did not lie. He truly practiced the six guiding principles.

What did he do then? He still had to do something. Therefore, he traveled everywhere and roamed about the mountains and rivers for fun. He went to all the famous mountains and great rivers. In the end he wandered to Qi Xia Mountain in Nanjing. At that time, Dhyana Master Yun Gu, a highly reputed monk of that time, lived there. When he went there, Dhyana Master Yun Gu gave him a cushion. The two of them sat facing each other in meditation.

Once he sat down, he did not move at all. He was able to enter Samadhi. Since he had no false thoughts, he sat there unperturbed. He neither swayed nor opened his eyes to look around. He sat there like an old monk who had entered Samadhi. They sat for three days straight. Dhyana Master Yun Gu suddenly rose and looked at him with surprise, saying, "Oh! You are really great! Where did you learn such good skill? I have sat with you face to face for three days, and you haven't even had a single false thought. You truly stand out above the common lot. You are truly remarkable. Whom did you learn from?" He said, "I know that one's fate is set. Therefore I'm not greedy for anything. Everything has been prearranged and predestined." Once Dhyana Master Yun Gu heard his words, he said, "Oh! I thought you were an extraordinary person who was above the common lot, a great hero. But actually you are just an ordinary person."

This time Yuan Liao Fan's curiosity was aroused. "Ah! Isn't one's fate predetermined? Isn't fate inevitable?" Dhyana Master Yun Gu said, "Do you really think that one's fate is inevitable? I see that you have been bound tightly by your own fate for the past few decades. You have not transcended your own fate in the least bit. If you are not an ordinary person, then what are you?" He continued, "You are an educated person; you should know the principle of pursuing good fortune and avoiding that which brings calamity in *The Book of Changes*. Furthermore, Confucianism teaches that families that accrue goodness will definitely enjoy abundant blessings; families that accrue evil will definitely suffer excessive disasters. If one's fate is inevitable, what need is there to pursue good fortune and avoid that which brings calamity?" At that, Yuan Liao Fan suddenly understood. He asked, "Then what should I do?" Master Yun Gu answered, "Do no evil and practice all good." From that moment on, Yuan was transformed into a new man. Not only did his appearance change, even his five internal organs—his heart, liver, spleen, lung and kidney—were transformed and cleansed. From then on, he did no evil but practiced all good deeds.

What happened after he did these things? Ah! Master Kong's previous predictions of Yuan's destiny based on his facial features were no longer accurate. He realized that one could actually create one's life.



善人，命運也不能拘束他、不能束縛他；大惡人也是，命運不能束縛他、也不能綁住他。因為人生來就應該做你的本分事情，那麼你不守本分了，你做了大的善事了，這超出了你的命運了；你或者做大的惡事了，也超出了你的命運了。所以說：「善惡兩條道，修的修，造的造。」

那麼這樣子給他一講，他從此之後就自己要創造命運了，那麼他就立功。頭先不是說立三千功，要升官？那麼要升官，他就立個「功過格」，一天做的善事他也記錄起來，做的惡事也記錄起來；等到晚上，他就把他一天所做得善惡事，焚香告帝——他就燒燒香，上稟玉皇大帝。這樣子，以後，他以前命運的批的都不靈了。本來他不能考上進士，做知縣以後，就不能再做大官了；他以後也中了進士，就做了做了很大的官。這不靈了，以後他又要求兒子；大約他是要做一萬個善，不只是三千了。那麼做一萬善，做得很辛苦的，很久很久也做不完，他就不知什麼時候這個善事可以做完？雖然他太太也幫著他做，他自己也做，可是總是做不完。他就遇著這個，他所管轄的這個地方，糧食都欠收。那個拿的給國家，拿他大銖還很貴的。譬如要：一場地要拿二兩銀子，在當時那是很貴的，那麼糧食失收，又要拿這個銖子，政府國家也不給免稅，那麼他自己就給免稅了。免什麼稅呢？他照著一半來收。應該拿二兩銀子的，他只收一兩。那麼這樣，萬民沾惠，這一下，他這一萬的功德都做圓滿了。

◎待續

Ordinary people all believe in fate, but fate is not fixed. Mao Zedong supposedly was destined a very good chairman, but later he became confused and ruined his own fortune. Humans possess the knowledge of determining their own destinies. One establishes one's own life and seeks one's own blessings. Misfortunes and blessings do not come unless one brings them on. Everything is brought about by oneself. An exceptionally kind person can transcend his fate; an exceptionally evil person is also not bound by his fate. This is because from the time of birth, you should know your place and do your duty. If you do not do what is expected but instead do a tremendous amount of good deeds, you can transcend your own fate; likewise, if you do profoundly evil deeds, you transcend your own fate as well. Therefore, it is said: "There are two paths: the path of goodness and the path of evil. Each of us goes his own way; some cultivate goodness and some commit evil."

From then on, Yuan wanted to create his own destiny. He first rendered meritorious service. He had to do three thousand meritorious deeds in order to earn a promotion. To do this, he kept a record of merits and faults. He recorded all his good and evil deeds throughout the day. In the evening, he burnt incense and reported all his good and bad deeds to the Jade Emperor. Hence, the predictions of his destiny were no longer accurate. Originally he was not meant to become a *jīn shì* [a successful candidate in the imperial examinations], and would not become an official of rank higher than that of a county magistrate. Later he became a *jīn shì* and a great official.

Since the predictions were no longer accurate, he now wanted to request a son. This was a rather big request. Therefore he had to do ten thousand good deeds, instead of three thousand. To do ten thousand good deeds was indeed very toilsome, and it would take a very long time to accomplish. He did not know when he could possibly finish his task. Although his wife also helped him out, he was still unable to finish the task. It so happened that the county that he governed had a lean harvest that year. Still, the people had to pay high taxes to the government. For example, they had to pay two taels of silver—which was worth a great deal at that time—for each piece of land. Faced with the poor harvest and high taxes that the government would not exempt the people from, Yuan decided to exempt the people from taxes himself. How did he do that? He reduced the amount of tax imposed on the people by half. Originally he was supposed to levy two taels of silver, now he only received one tael. In this way, tens of thousands of people benefited. As a result, he accomplished ten thousand meritorious deeds.

◎To be continued