

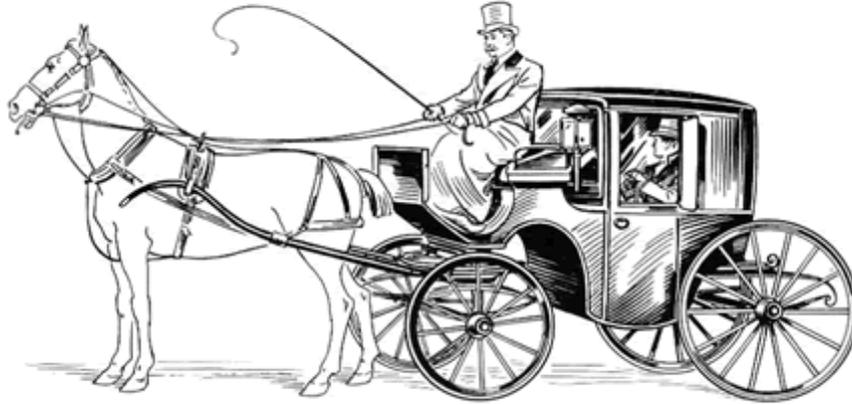
Interbeing
by Thich Nhat Hanh

"If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are. 'Interbeing' is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix 'inter' with the verb 'to be,' we have a new verb, inter-be.

"If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. Without sunshine, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. The paper and the sunshine inter-are. And if we continue to look we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see wheat. We know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in the sheet of paper. The logger's father and mother are in it too. When we look in this way, we see that without all these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist.

"Looking even more deeply, we can see ourselves in this sheet of paper too. This is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of paper, it is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can see that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. We cannot point out one thing that is not here – time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this paper. That is why I think the word inter-be should be in the dictionary. 'To be' is to inter-be- we cannot just be by ourselves alone. We have to inter-be with every other thing. This sheet of paper is, because everything else is.

"Suppose we try to return one of the elements to its source. Suppose we return the sunshine to the sun. Do you think that this sheet of paper would be possible? No, without sunshine nothing can be. And if we return the logger to its mother, then we have no sheet of paper either. The fact is that this sheet of paper is made up only of 'non-paper' elements. And if we return these non-paper elements to their sources, then there can be no paper at all. Without non-paper elements, like mind, logger, sunshine, and so on, there will be no paper. As thin as this sheet of paper is, it contains everything in the universe in it."



The physical, mental and emotional elements form what we often call our personality or our “ego.” And the Master represents our true and transcendental essence. So let's look at each of these elements in more detail:

The Physical Body – The Chariot

Following this comparison, the state of our physical body: **the chariot, depends on the maintenance given by an intelligent driver, but also depends on the way it is led by the horse.** Since the state of our physical body is easily seen and measured, it can give us a clear indication of the degree of command the driver has over the entire vehicle.

The Emotions – The Horse

Interestingly enough, in the term *emotion*, we have the word “motion”. Our emotions determine our driving power, our strength, our capacity to act. Therefore, **our emotions are a large reservoir of energy.** It is the horse that has the energy to pull the entire vehicle, it is an essential element for the journey. The question is: **how is this energy reservoir being used?**

The Mind – The Driver

The driver: the mind, is the one that holds the thinking process and his functions are extremely important as **he commands the whole vehicle.** For instance, the horse responds to the thinking process of the driver and not to external circumstances, as we had originally believed. Also, the driver is the connection between the master and the ego.

Ideally, the functions of the driver should be:

1. Delivering the external information to the Master
2. Listening to the instructions of the Master
3. Successfully leading the horse in the right direction, according to the master's instructions
4. Taking intelligent care of the chariot

The Essence – The Master

The names given to this essence are as diverse as the different cultures and languages that exist, it can be called: soul, spirit, higher self, etc. Even though the materialistic philosophy still, to this day, denies the existence of this essence, long standing traditions, the direct experience of more and more people, as well as recent scientific discoveries, are revealing its undeniable presence. **The Master is the undeniable guide and the wisdom of the whole ensemble.**

What is the current functioning?

The current functioning of our experience, has often denied or neglected the existence of the master and therefore has unknowingly missed its guidance, in other words: **the driver has had to lead the chariot by himself,** he has failed to listen to the subtle but vital instructions of the master. Up to recently, the driver had not developed a relationship with the master, in many cases he was not even aware the master was there. So **the functioning of the vehicle has been very limited.**

The driver does not have and will never have all the knowledge to lead the horse and the chariot in the best possible way, he needs the Master's wisdom to do a good job. **All the challenges, problems and difficulties that surround us at a personal and planetary level come directly from this lack of communication and our limited functioning as a result.**

However, for the first time in our history, at least the history we can trace back to, we are closer to attaining the ideal human model, where **The Master can recover its influence and authority.** If we are able to truly integrate the master into our daily life, we will be approaching a great revolution of the human consciousness which in turn will allow us to create a new world for each one of us and for the humanity as a whole.