

Turtle and Teacher



André Simon



Many, many years ago, by the banks of the river 河
JO LAN («sword lily») in the province of DA in the
great Empire of China, Teacher 教师
XIE MON was fishing. The river wa-
ters were running, the birds were
singing sweet tunes and there
was a feeling of peace in the air.
Everything was so marvelous,
that we suppose the fisherman
教师 XIE MON surely arrived
to the highest level of spiri-
tuality; the level of inner
peace. This happened be-
cause 教师 XIE MON
was not a simple fisher-
man, but in reality he
was one of the most
well-known philosophers.

Nearby a big turtle asked him if he
was able to understand the language of the ani-
mals. 教师 XIE MON confirmed this and explained to
the turtle why the sages are able to do this.

«Once upon a time, animals and men were beings
with the same conscience but a different appearance
and voice. These signs, of the same identity of con-
science and mental similarity, remain to this day, so it
is possible for some sages or philosophers to under-
stand animal speech. The signs of mental similarity

are that both animals and humans try to protect their
life and remain in good health. They also procreate in
the same way. The animal young and human babies
remain with their mother after birth. Both animals
and human beings avoid the open plains and prepare
for themselves a dwelling in the den, nest or shelter in
their houses. In the same way they both avoid cold
places and search for sunshine.

Animals and humans live in society; animals in
herds, humans in families. When the herds move, the
youngsters are in the middle with the adults protect-
ing them in the outer circle. Soldiers at war protect
their comrades in the same way. Animals and humans
gather together to drink, animals at their waterholes
and humans in tea houses. When they find new food
sources they inform each other and take the food
either to their den or from the markets to their homes
as the case may be. For the sages only the identity
of conscience of the animals is important, not their
appearance or their voices. This identity once equal
and now similar permits the sages to understand the
animal speech.»

This tale is based on an ancient Chinese silk inscription. The
tale is dedicated to Charles Darwin, on the occasion of the
bicentenary of his birth(12.2.1809) and the 150th anniver-
sary of publication of his seminal work«On the origin of
Species».

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