

## TAO TE CHING

(1) The spirit one can talk about is not the eternal spirit, and what you can name is not the eternal name. Nameless-Tao is the beginning of the heavens and the Earth. If you name it-it is no more than Matter.

Therefore: he who conceives of nature freely grasps this Spirit and he who strives for material things is left with only the shell. Spirit and matter are both one in their origin, yet different in appearance. This unity is a mystery-truly the mystery of all mysteries, the gate to all spirituality.

(2) Only when man recognizes beauty as such does ugliness become reality. Only when man recognizes goodness as such does evil become reality. Because: being and nothingness began as one. Weight and weightlessness cannot exist alone. Distance and brevity prove each other and so do height and depth. Tune and voice abound together and past and present flow into one.

Therefore the Sage remains in serenity whatever happens and silently does his teaching. As matters proceed, the Sage is not irritated. He works but wants no possessions. He acts but does not linger at single things. He creates but does not hang on a single word and because he is not tied to It, he will never miss It.

(3) Not to give preference to the high and mighty will deter the envy of the people in order. To demonstrate no desire will give them peace in their hearts. Therefore, when the Sage governs, he frees his people of passionate wishes and offers serenity to their souls. The Sage weakens greedy curiosity and strengthens the backbone of the upright. So does he master true serenity in good government.

(4) The Spirit is free of things yet inexhaustible in its impact. The Spirit is like the creator of all being. He dulls the sharp meanness that clarifies all confusion. He unifies in kindness. He knows the oneness of man with all dust. The Spirit is eternal. I know not when it began. It almost seemed to have preceded the Lord Itself.

(5) Heaven and earth know no preference. They look upon all beings as upon wooden animals. The sage knows no preference. He looks upon people as if they were made of wood. The space between heaven and earth is like an ocean of wind and the emptiness of which creation follows creation. Words cannot describe it. It must be perceived by one's inmost self.

(6) The Spirit of the deep never dies. It is the eternal mother: The gateway through which wind The ever-protecting roots of heaven and earth. It is eternal becoming, effort-less creation.

(7) Heaven and earth endure forever. Why do Heaven and earth endure eternally? Because they live not for themselves But for eternity. So does the Sage withdraw In order that his inner Self may advance. He loses his Self to preserve his self. Is it not that he fulfills his Being by giving up his being?

(8) Generosity is like the Waters. It is a balm to all beings and rejects none. It dwells in places shunned by the masses, and therefore close to the Spirit. Generosity seeks out in

dwelling the humble, in thinking depth, in giving love, in speaking truth, in ruling justice, in work knowledge in all our deeds the proper time. Generosity does not reject and therefore will not be rejected.

(9) The full decanter if carried will spill over, The knife in use will lose its edge. Treasures of gold and gems are difficult to protect. Wealth and rank when joined by arrogance will now perish. To fulfill one's tasks, to find acceptance and then to retire to loneliness, is the true spiritual way.

(10) Who finds union of mind and heart will reach immortality. Who masters his passions and turns them to deeds of kindness, is greater than a King. Who cleanses and clears his soul becomes free of vice. Who governs in love and justice is a benefactor even in mere contemplation. He is fearless should even the heavens come down. Who has insight in the depths of Times, may have not knowledge, yet supreme wisdom. To work and conserve, to work without greed for possessions, To work and let others use the produce, To encourage and not dominate, That I call deep virtue.

(11) Thirty spikes run into one hub: yet in the emptiness of the wheel lies its essence. From clay a jar is formed: yet in its emptiness lies the essence of the container. Rooms are made by cutting windows and doors into the walls, yet in its emptiness lies the essence of the room. The visual matter can be observed but it is the Invisible that constitutes its true being.

(12) Fine colors blind eyes to true reality Fine Tones shut out the other sounds. Fine spices deaden the taste. Races and hunts disturb a gentle soul. Gems and gold seduce the heart. The Sage follows not the eyes but the soul, Not the senses but the essence.

(13) Forgiveness is to be shunned like a disgrace. Ambition for honors is a burden like the body. Forgiveness denigrates; one lives in hope to obtain, in fear of losing it. Ambition for honors is a burden like the body. The body is burdensome. If I had no body I would be burdenfree. Who honors the community as himself is worthy of her. Who loves the community as himself makes her his own.

(14) We search for it yet see it not; it is the invisible. We listen for it, yet hear it not; it is the untouchable. Its trinity is inseparable. We recognize it only as one, innerbound.

Its distance is incomprehensible, its depth can not be fathomed. Eternally creative, it can not be defined. It goes back to Nothingness. It can be called: The incomprehensible Mysterious. You walk towards it and find not even its Beginning. You follow it and there is no End. Who understands the Spirit of the old Sages masters his own time, and thru them the very root of all time. Such is the continuum of the Spirit.

(15) The great sages of antiquity were wise and intuitive. It is difficult to comprehend their depth. They were cautious like men who are crossing an ice covered river, Cautious like people wary of certain neighbors. Reserved as only guests are. Relenting like melting ice, plain as uncut timber, open like a valley. Dark as deep water. Who can as they interpret the turbulent thru serenity? Who can as they thru their own lives revive the dead souls? Who is filled with serene thoughts desires no other fulfillment, Who desires no other fulfillment is not attacked by novelties of the day. Such man can be of simple status yet reach perfection.

(16) Who ascends the peak of Emptiness Will reach serenity. All Beings do I see arise and then return whence they came. To return to one's origin means to acquiesce. To acquiesce means to have fulfilled one's destiny. To fulfill one's destiny means to have comprehended eternity. To comprehend eternity means to be enlightened. Not to compre-

hend eternity means to be subject of passions, and that is evil. Comprehending eternity makes one magnanimous. Magnanimity makes one just. To be just is Kingly. The Kingly is Heavenly. The Heavenly is the Spiritual. The Spirit is Immortal. And thus the ephemerality of the body can not harm us.

(17) When a ruler is truly great the people hardly notice his existence. Some of their successors were admired, some were feared, some were despised, Rulers without faith in the people lost the people's confidence. The great rulers did not aggrandize themselves, They performed their tasks and the people felt: We are among ourselves.

(18) Where the great Spirit is in decline, there is much talk of love and liberty. Where the great Spirit is in decline, there is much talk of prudence and equality. Where peace is absent in the family, there is much talk of family devotion. When suppression darkens the lands, everywhere there is talk of loyalty and obedience.

(19) Pretend not to saintliness, nor to smartness and the people will prosper! Talk not of Humanity nor of absolute Justice and the people will return to family devotion. Give up the great profits as well as your Luxuries and there will be fewer thieves and robbers. In all these things the pretense is harmful. Therefore one must retain the lasting virtues: To retain Simple goodness, humility and moderation.

(20) Give up the Booklearning and you may win serenity. The difference between yes and certainty, how meaningless -but that between good and evil, how immeasurably great. The world venerates Booklearning, I can not participate. Perhaps this is limitless delusion. The people glory in their festivals, as if on top of a great tower. I alone am silent, as no message had reached me of these events, like a child that yet can not smile, deserted, homeless. They all overflow, I alone seem empty. O my foolish heart: I am confused. They appear unperturbed, I alone step in the dark. They appear exuberant, I alone am sad, sad as the sea. Torn apart like a vagrant. They are imbued with usefulness, Only I am clumsy like a peasant, I am different from them, Yet I am on my knees before Creative Nature.

(21) True Virtue is born of Reason, The essence of reason is unfathomable and incomprehensible. The faces of reason can not be discerned, The world that appears in reason, no one knows how, Impenetrable is the darkness where the heart of Being dwells, This being is Truth itself and Faith itself. From eternity to eternity, they will never perish. Who saw the beginning of All.

The beginning All, one knows only thru the perennial Spirit.

(22) What is half will become perfect. What is crooked will become straight. What is empty will be filled. What is old will be rejuvenated. Who has little, will receive in plenty. Who has much, will be deprived. The Sage embraces the All and becomes the Idol of the World. He does not look out for himself, and thus he glories. He does not please himself, and thus the world possesses him. He does not flaunt his accomplishments, and thus the world venerates him. He strives not to be on top, thus he will be elevated. He does not attack, and the world around him is still. Truly: Everything flows freely into the seeker of perfection.

(23) To speak sparingly is the natural course. A whirlwind lasts not throughout the morning. A spray rain lasts not the day. Such it is between heaven and earth. And such it is with man. Who dedicates himself to reason will become one with reason. Who dedicates himself to virtue, will become one with virtue. Who gives to evil will become one with evil. Who is one with reason, will be embraced by reason. Who is one with virtue, will be embraced by virtue. Who joins evil will be one with evil. Who has no faith, will never

inspire faith.

(24) No one can stand solid when on his toes. No one can run with spread legs. Who admires himself will not be venerated. Who is pleased with oneself, the world will not praise. Who praises himself, merits little appreciation. Who pushes for the top, will not be elevated. For the Spirit he is a leftover, an odd growth on the body. The people will look upon him in disdain, And those who live by reason will not emulate his like.

(25) There is a Being of Perfection, incomprehensible. It ever was, still and formless, before they came, stars and earth. Unchangeable and alone, unencumbered, whirling thru Time. I name it, Creative Nature. It has no name, shall I call it Tao, the Spirit? Or the substance, the infinite? The infinite in unlimited attributes? The great Distant, that forever returns! Tao is great, the Heavens are great. The Universe is great. May the ruler be in tune with the Spirit. Four things are great in the world, May the ruler be one of them. Man is under the law of the earth, the earth under the law of the Universe, The universe under the law of Tao and Tao is the Law itself.

(26) Serenity is wiser than superficiality, dignity is master of turbulence. The sage does not step off the path of serenity. He is not distracted by unruly passions, angered in contemplation nothing can perturb him. Woe, if the ruler of the land considers himself more important than the realm. His follower loses, who succumbs to frivolity, His dominance loses, who is driven by passions.

(27) An experienced wanderer needs neither guideposts nor paths. A good mathematician needs no counting board. A good orator needs no false arguments. A good locksmith needs no key. The Sage is a good helper of man and never despairs. Such is his enlightenment. The Sage is the teacher of the confused, and values his pupil. Who does not honor his teacher, Who does not value his pupil, lacks wisdom in spite of his knowledge. Such is true Spirituality.

(28) Whoever is manly and strong, yet gentle of deeds, becomes the stream of the world, remains in steadfast virtue and returns to nature like a child. Whoever feels in himself the Light and fights Darkness becomes a symbol for the World. Whoever becomes a symbol for the world, steadfast in virtue, returns to the very substance of Being. Whoever feels his own Height still lives in humility, becomes like a fertile valley. Whoever becomes a valley of the world, is of eternal virtue and returns to the very substance of Being. Man is like uncut timber, only intuitive insight brings about perfection. The Sage in his virtue is the first in his community. A true ruler has no need of aggression.

(29) Whoever wishes to rise by conquest will fail. The true goal in life is spiritual and can not be conquered by force. The aggressor destroys it. The conqueror loses it. Mankind is forever in change, Some run ahead, soon they fall back. Some are powerful, soon they weaken. Some are fiery, soon they are cold. Some are victorious, soon defeated. The Sage is not moved by earthly ambitions, he avoids self aggrandizement, he avoids self elevation.

(30) Whoever advises the ruler in the spirit of Tao will avoid rule by force of arms: force begets force. Where armies are arrayed against each other, grow thistle and thorn. Wars are the parents of hunger and misery. The Sage wants peace, nothing else, he aspires never for conquest. He is victorious in restraint, victorious with arrogance, victorious without presumption, victorious without demonstration and offense. Whoever seeks military adventures will perish in them. Such is the fate of rapaciousness. Such is the fate of materialism.

(31) Victorious in restraint, victorious with arrogance, victorious without presumption,

victorious without demonstration and offense. Whoever seeks military adventures will perish in them. Such is the fate of rapaciousness. Now arms, however beautiful, are instruments of evil omen, hateful, it may be said, to all creatures. Therefore they who have the Tao do not like to employ them. The superior man ordinarily considers the left hand the most honourable place, but in time of war the right hand. Those sharp weapons are instruments of evil omen, and not the instruments of the superior man;-he uses them only on the compulsion of necessity. Calm and repose are what he prizes; victory (by force of arms) is to him undesirable. To consider this desirable would be to delight in the slaughter of men; and he who delights in the slaughter of men cannot get his will in the kingdom. On occasions of festivity to be on the left hand is the prized position; on occasions of mourning, the right hand. The second in command of the army has his place on the left; the general commanding in chief has his on the right;-his place, that is, is assigned to him as in the rites of mourning. He who has killed multitudes of men should weep for them with the bitterest grief; and the victor in battle has his place (rightly) according to those rites.

(32) The Tao, considered as unchanging, has no name. Though in its primordial simplicity it may be small, the whole world dares not deal with (one embodying) it as a minister. If a feudal prince or the king could guard and hold it, all would spontaneously submit themselves to him. Heaven and Earth (under its guidance) unite together and send down the sweet dew, which, without the directions of men, reaches equally everywhere as of its own accord. As soon as it proceeds to action, it has a name.

When it once has that name, (men) can know to rest in it. When they know to rest in it, they can be free from all risk of failure and error. The relation of the Tao to all the world is like that of the great rivers and seas to the streams from the valleys.

(33) He who knows other men is discerning; he who knows himself is intelligent. He who overcomes others is strong; he who overcomes himself is mighty. He who is satisfied with his lot is rich; he who goes on acting with energy has a (firm) will.

He who does not fail in the requirements of his position, continues long; he who dies and yet does not perish, has longevity.

(34) All-pervading is the Great Tao! It may be found on the left hand and on the right. All things depend on it for their production, which it gives to them, not one refusing obedience to it. When it gives to them, not one refusing obedience to it. When its work is accomplished, it does not claim the name of having done it. It clothes all things as with a garment, and makes no assumption of being their lord;-it may be named in the smallest things. All things return (to their root and disappear), and do not know that it is it which presides over their doing so;-it may be named in the greatest things. Hence the sage is able (in the same way) to accomplish his great achievements. It is through his not making himself great that he can accomplish them.

(35) To him who holds in his hands the Great Image (of the invisible Tao), the whole world repairs. Men resort to him, and receive no hurt, but (find) rest, peace, and the feeling of ease.

Music and dainties will make the passing guest stop (for a time).

But though the Tao as it comes from the mouth, seems insipid and has no flavour, though it seems not worth being looked at or listened to, the use of it is inexhaustible.

(36) When one is about to take an inspiration, he is sure to make a (previous) expiration; when he is going to weaken another, he will first strengthen him; when he is going to

overthrow another, he will first have raised him up; when he is going to despoil another, he will first have made gifts to him:-this is called 'hiding the light (of his procedure).' The soft overcomes the hard; and the weak the strong. Fishes should not be taken from the deep; instruments for the profit of a state should not be shown to the people.

(37) The tao in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so there is nothing which it does not do. If princes and kings were able to maintain it, all things would of themselves be transformed by them. If this transformation became to me an object of desire, I would express the desire by the nameless simplicity.

Simplicity without a name. Is free from all external aim. With no desire, at rest and still, All things go right as of their will.

(38) (Those who) possessed in highest degree the attributes (of the Tao) did not (seek) to show them, and therefore they possessed them (in fullest measure). (Those who) possessed in a lower degree those attributes (sought how) not to lose them, and therefore they did not possess them (in fullest measure). (Those who) possessed in the highest degree those attributes did nothing (with a purpose), and had no need to do anything. (Those who) possessed them in a lower degree were (always) doing, and had need to be so doing. (Those who) possessed the highest benevolence were (always seeking) to carry it out, and had no need to be doing so. (Those who) possessed the highest righteousness were (always seeking) to carry it out, and had need to be so doing. (Those who) possessed the highest (sense of) propriety were (always seeking) to carry it out, and had need to be so doing. (Those who) possessed the highest (sense of) propriety were (always seeking) to show it, and when men did not respond to it, they bared the arm and marched up to them. Thus it was that when the Tao was lost, its attributes appeared; when its attributes were lost, benevolence appeared; when benevolence was lost, the proprieties appeared. Now propriety is the attenuated form of leal-heartedness and good faith, and is also the commencement of disorder; swift apprehension is (only) a flower of the Tao, and is the beginning of stupidity. Thus it is that the Great man abides by what is solid and eschews what is flimsy; dwells with the fruit and not with the flower. It is thus that he puts away the one and makes choice of the other.

[\*Note: 'leal-heartedness' = loyal-heartedness.]

(39) The things which from of old have got the One (the Tao) are

Heaven which by it is bright and pure; Earth rendered thereby firm and sure; Spirits with powers by it supplied; Valleys kept full through their void; All creatures which through it do live; Princes and kings who from it get The model which to all they give.

All these are the results of the one (Tao).

If heaven were not thus pure, it soon would rend; If earth were not thus sure, 'twould break and bend; Without these powers, the spirits soon would fail; If not so filled, the drought would parch each vale; Without that life, creatures would pass away; Princes and kings, without that moral sway, However grand and high, would all decay.

Thus it is that dignity finds its (firm) root in its (previous) meanness, and what is lofty finds its stability in the lowness (from which it rises). Hence princes and kings call themselves 'Orphans,' 'Men of small virtue,' and as 'Carriages without a nave.' Is not this an acknowledgment that in their considering themselves mean they see the foundation of their dignity? So it is that in the enumeration of the different parts of a carriage we do not come on hat makes it answer the ends of a carriage. They do not wish to show themselves elegant-looking as jade, but (prefer) to be coarse-looking as an (ordinary) stone.

(40) The movement of the Tao By contraries proceeds; And weakness marks the course of Tao's mighty deeds.

All things under heaven sprang from it as existing (and named); that existence sprang from It as non-existent (and not named).

(41) Scholars of the highest class, when they hear about the Tao, earnestly carry it into practice. Scholars of the middle class, when they have heard about it, seem now to keep it and now to lose it. Scholars of the lowest class, when they have heard about it, laugh greatly at it. If it were not (thus) laughed at, it would not be fit to be the Tao. Therefore the sentence makers have thus expressed themselves:-

'The Tao, when brightest seen, seems light to lack: Who progress in it makes, seems drawing back; Its even way is like a rugged track. Its highest virtue from the vale doth rise; Its greatest beauty seems to offend the eyes; And he has most whose lot the least supplies. Its firmest virtue seems but poor and low; Its solid truth seems change to under-go; Its largest square doth yet no corner show; A vessel great, it is the slowest made; Loud is its sound, but never word it said; A semblance great, the shadow of a shade.'

The tao is hidden, and has no name; but it is the Tao which is skilful at imparting (to all things what they need) and making them complete.

(42) The Tao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced all things. All things leave behind them the obscurity (out of which they have come), and go forward to embrace the Brightness (into which they have emerged), while they are harmonised by the Breath of Vacancy. What men dislike is to be orphans, to have little virtue, to be as carriages without naves; and yet these are the designations which kings and princes use for themselves. So it is that some things are increased by being diminished, and others are diminished by being increased. What other men (thus) teach, I also teach. The violent and strong do not die their natural death. I will make this the basis of my teaching.

(43) The softest thing in the world dashes against and overcomes the hardest; that which has no (substantial) existence enters where there is no crevice. I know hereby what advantage belongs to doing nothing (with a purpose). There are few in the world who attain to the teaching without words, and the advantage arising from non-action.

(44) Or fame of life, Which do you hold more dear? Or life or wealth, To which would you adhere? Keep life and lose those other things; Keep them and lose your life:-which brings Sorrow and pain more near? Thus we may see, Who cleaves to fame Rejects what is more great; Who loves large stores Gives up the richer state. Who is content Needs fear no shame. Who knows to stop Incurs no blame. From danger free Long live shall he.

(45) Who thinks his great achievements poor Shall find his vigour long endure. Of greatest fullness, deemed a void, Exhaustion ne'er shall stem the tide. Do thou what's straight still crooked deem; Thy greatest art still stupid seem, And eloquence a stammering scream.

Constant action overcomes cold; being still overcomes heat. Purity and stillness give the correct law to all under heaven.

(46) When the Tao prevails in the world, they send back their swift horses to (draw) the dung-carts. When the Tao is disregarded in the world, the warhorses breed in the border lands. There is no guilt greater than to sanction ambition; no calamity greater than to be

discontented with one's lot; no fault greater than the wish to be getting. Therefore the sufficiency of contentment is an enduring and unchanging sufficiency.

(47) Without going outside his door, one understands (all that takes place) under the sky; without looking out from his window, one sees the Tao of Heaven. The farther that one goes out (from himself), the less he knows. Therefore the sages got their knowledge without traveling; gave their (right) names to things without seeing them; and accomplished their ends without any purpose of doing so.

(48) He who devotes himself to learning (seeks) from day to day to increase (his knowledge): he who devotes himself to the Tao (seeks) from day to day to diminish (his doings). He diminishes it and again diminishes it, till he arrives at doing nothing (on purpose). Having arrived at this point of non- action, there is nothing which he does not do. He who gets as his own all under heaven does so by giving himself no trouble (with that end). If one take trouble (with that end), he is not equal to getting as his all under heaven.

(49) The sage has no invariable mind of his own; he makes the mind of the people his mind. To those who are good (to me), I am good; and to those who are not (to me), I am also good,-and thus (all) get to be good. To those who are sincere (with me), I am sincere; and to those who are not sincere (with me), i am also sincere;-and thus (all) get to be sincere. The sage has in the world an appearance of indecision, and keeps his mind in a state of indifference to all. The people all keep their eyes and ears directed to him, and he deals with them all as his children.

(50) Men come forth and live; they enter (again) and die. Of every ten three are ministers of life (to themselves); and three are ministers of death. there are also three in every ten whose aim is to live, but whose movements tend to the land (or place) of death. And for what reason? Because of their excessive endeavours to perpetuate life. But I have heard that he who is skilful in managing the life entrusted to him for a time travels on the land without having to avoid buff coat or sharp weapon. The rhinoceros finds no place in him into which to thrust its horn, not the tiger a place in which to fix its claws, nor the weapon a place to admit its point. And for what reason? Because there is in him no place of death.

(51) All things are produced by the Tao, and nourished by its outflowing operation. They receive their forms according to the nature of each, and are completed according to the circumstances of their condition. Therefore all things without exception honour the Tao, and exalt its outflowing operation. This honouring of the Tao and exalting of its operation is not the result of any ordination, but always a spontaneous tribute. Thus it is that the Tao produces (all things), nourishes them, brings them to their full growth, nurses them, completes them, matures them, maintains them and overspreads them. It produces them and makes no claim to the possession of them; it carries them though their processes and does not vaunt its ability in doing so; it brings them to maturity and exercises no control over them;-this is called mysterious operation.

(52) (The Tao) which originated all under the sky is to be considered as the mother of them all. When the mother is founded, we know what her children should be. When one knows that he is his mother's child, and proceeds to guard (the qualities of) the mother that belong to him, to the end of his life he will be free from all peril. Let him keep his mouth closed, and shut up the portals (of his nostrils), and all his life he will be exempt from laborious exertion. Let him keep his mouth open, and (spend his breath) in the promotion of his affairs, and all his life there will be no safety for him. The perception of what is small is (the secret of) clear-sightedness; the guarding of what is soft and tender is (the secret of) strength.



Who uses well his light. Reverting to its (source so) bright, Will from his body ward all blight, And hides the unchanging from men's sight.

(53) If I were suddenly to become known, and (put into a position to) conduct (a government) according to the Great Tao, what I should be most afraid of would be a boastful display. The great Tao (or way) is very level and easy; but people love the by-ways. Their court(-yards and buildings) shall be well kept, but their fields shall be ill-cultivated, and their granaries very empty. They shall wear elegant and ornamented robes, carry a sharp sword at their girdle, pamper themselves in eating and drinking, and have a superabundance of property and wealth;-such (princes) may be called robbers and boasters. This is contrary to the Tao surely!

(54) What (Tao's) skilful planter plants can never be upturn; What his skilful arms enfold, From him can ne'er be borne. Sons shall bring in lengthening line, Sacrifices to his shrine. Tao when nursed within one's self, His vigour will make true; And where the family it rules What riches will accrue! The neighbourhood where it prevails In thriving will abound; And when 'tis seen throughout the state. Good fortune will be found. Employ it the kingdom o'er, And men thrive all around.

In this way the effect will be seen in the person, by the observation of different cases; in the family; in the neighbourhood; in the state; and in the kingdom. How do I know that this effect is sure to hold thus all under the sky? By this (method of observation).

(55) He who has in himself abundantly the attributes (of the Tao) is like an infant. Poisonous insects will not sting him; fierce beasts will not seize him; birds of prey will not strike him. (The infant's) bones are weak and its sinews soft, ut yet its grasp is firm. It knows not yet the union of male and female, and yet its virile member may be excited;-showing the perfection of its physical essence. All day long it will cry without its throat becoming hoarse;-showing the harmony (in its constitution).

To him by whom this harmony is known, (The secret of) the unchanging (Tao) is shown, And in the knowledge wisdom finds its throne. All life-increasing arts to evil turn; Where the mind makes the vital breath to burn, (False) is the strength, (and o'er it we should mourn.)

When things have become strong, they (then) become old, which may be said to be contrary to the Tao. Whatever is contrary to the Tao soon ends.

(56) He who knows (the Tao) does not (care to) speak (about it); he who is (ever ready to) speak about it does not know it. He (who knows it) will keep his mouth shut and close the portals (of his nostrils). He will blunt his sharp points and unravel the complications of things; he will temper his brightness, and bring himself into agreement with the obscurity (of others).

This is called 'the Mysterious Agreement.' (Such an one) cannot be treated familiarly of distantly; he is beyond all consideration of profit or injury; of nobility or meanness:-he is the noblest man under heaven.

(57) A state may be ruled by (measures of) correction; weapons of war may be used with crafty dexterity; (but) the kingdom is made one's own (only) by freedom from action and purpose. How do I know that it is so? By these facts:-In the kingdom the multiplication of prohibitive enactments increases the poverty of the people; the more implements to add to their profit that the people have, the greater disorder is there in the state and clan; the more acts of crafty dexterity that men possess, the more do strange contrivances appear; the more display there is of legislation, the more thieves and robbers

there are. Therefore a sage has said, 'I will do nothing (of purpose), and the people will be transformed of themselves; I will be fond of keeping still, and the people will of themselves become correct. I will take no trouble about it, and the people will of themselves become rich; I will manifest no ambition, and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity.'

(58) The government that seems the most unwise, Oft goodness to the people best supplies; That which is meddling, touching everything, Will work but ill, and disappointment bring.

Misery! -happiness is to be found by its side! Happiness! – misery lurks beneath it! Who knows what either will come in the end? Shall we then dispense with correction? The (method of) correction shall by a turn become distortion, and the good in it shall by a turn become evil. The delusion of the people (on this point) has indeed subsisted for a long time. Therefore the sage is (like) a square which cuts no one (with its angles): (like) a corner which injures no one (with its sharpness). He is straightforward, but allows himself no license; he is bright, but does not dazzle.

(59) For regulating the human (in our constitution) and rendering the (proper) service to the heavenly, there is nothing like moderation. It is only by this moderation that there is effected an early return (to man's normal state). That early return is what I call the repeated accumulation of the attributes (of the Tao). With that repeated accumulation of those attributes, there comes the subjugation we know not what shall be the limit; and when one knows not what the limit shall be, he may be the ruler of a state. He who possesses the mother of the state may continue long. His case is like that (of the plant) of which we say that its roots are deep and its flower stalks firm; -this is the way to secure that its enduring life shall long be seen.

(60) Governing a great state is like cooking small fish. Let the kingdom be governed according to the Tao, and the manes of the departed will not manifest their spiritual energy. It is not that those manes have not that spiritual energy, but it will not be employed to hurt men. It is not that it could not hurt men, but neither does the ruling sage hurt them. When these two do not injuriously affect each other, their good influences converge in the virtue (of the Tao).

(61) What makes a great state is its being (like) a low-lying, down-flowing (stream);-it becomes the centre to which tend (all the small states) under heaven. (To illustrate from) the case of all females:-the female always overcomes the male by her stillness. Stillness may be considered (a sort of) abasement. Thus it is that a great state, by condescending to small states, gains them for itself; and that small states, by abasing themselves to a great state, win it over to them. In the one case the abasement leads to gaining adherents, in the other case to procuring favour. The great state only wishes to unite men together and nourish them; a small state only wishes to be received by, and to serve, the other. Each gets what it desires, but the great state must learn to abase itself.

(62) Tao has of all things the most honoured place. No treasures give good men so rich a grace; Bad men it guards, and doth their ill efface.

(Its) admirable words can purchase honour; (its) admirable deeds can raise their performer above others. Even men who are not good are not abandoned by it. Therefore when the sovereign occupies his place as the Son of Heaven, and he has appointed his three ducal ministers though (a prince) were to send in a round symbol-of-rank large enough to fill both the hands, and that as the precursor of the team of horses (in the court-yard), such an offering would not be equal to (a lesson of) this Tao, which one might

present on his knees. Why was it that the ancients prized this Tao so much? Was it not because it could be got by seeking for it, and the guilty could escape (from the stain of their guilt) by it? This is the reason why all under heaven consider it the most valuable thing.

(63) (It is the way of the Tao) to act without (thinking of) acting; to conduct affairs without (feeling the) trouble of them; to taste without discerning any flavour; to consider what is small as great, and a few as many; and to recompense injury with kindness. (The master of it) anticipates things that are difficult while they are easy, and does things that would become great while they are small. All difficult things in the world are sure to arise from a previous state in which they were easy, and all great things from one in which they were small.

Therefore the sage, while he never does what is great, is able on that account to accomplish the greatest things. He who lightly promises is sure to keep but little faith; he who is continually thinking things easy is sure to find them difficult. Therefore the sage sees difficulty even in what seems easy, and so never has any difficulties.

(64) That which is at rest is easily kept hold of; before a thing has given indications of its presence, it is easy to take measures against it; that which is brittle is easily broken; that which is very small is easily dispersed. Action should be taken before a thing has made its appearance; order should be secured before disorder has begun. The tree which fills the arms grew from the tiniest sprout; the tower of nine storeys rose from a (small) heap of earth; the journey of a thousand li commenced with a single step. He who acts (with an ulterior purpose) does harm; he who takes hold of a thing (in the same way) loses his hold. (But) people in their conduct of affairs are constantly ruining them when they are on the eve of success. If they were careful at the end, as (they should be) at the beginning, they would not so ruin them. Therefore the sage desires what (other men) do not desire, and does not prize things difficult to get; he learns what (other men) do not learn, and turns back to what the multitude of men have passed by. Thus he helps the natural development of all things, and does not dare to act (with an ulterior purpose of his own).

(65) The ancients who showed their skill in practising the Tao did so, not to enlighten the people, but rather to make them simple and ignorant. The difficulty in governing the people arises from their having much knowledge. He who (tries to) govern a state by his wisdom is a scourge to it; while he who does not (try to) do so is a blessing. He who knows these two things finds in them also his model and rule. Ability to know this model and rule constitutes what we call the mysterious excellence (of a governor). Deep and far reaching is such mysterious excellence, showing indeed its possessor as opposite to others, but leading them to a great conformity to him.

(66) That whereby the rivers and seas are able to receive the homage and tribute of all the valley streams, is their skill in being lower than they;-it is thus that they are the kings of them all. So it is that the sage, wishing to be above men, puts himself by his words below them, and wishing to be before them, places his person behind them. In this way though he has his place above them, men do not feel his weight, nor though he has his place before them, do they feel it an injury to them. Therefore all in the world delight to exalt him and do not weary of him. Because he does not strive, no one finds it possible to strive with him.

(67) All the world says that, while my Tao is great, it yet appears to be inferior (to other systems of teaching). Now it is just its greatness that makes it seem to be inferior. If it were like any other (system), for long would its smallness have been known! But I have

three precious things which I prize and hold fast. The first is gentleness; the second is economy; and the third is shrinking from taking precedence of others. With that gentleness I can be bold; with that economy I can be liberal; shrinking from taking precedence of others, I can become a vessel of the highest honour. Now-a-days they give up gentleness and are all for being bold; economy, and are all for being liberal; the hindmost place, and seek only to be foremost;-(of all which the end is) death. Gentleness is sure to be victorious even in battle, and firmly to maintain its ground. Heaven will save its possessor, by his (very) gentleness protecting him.

(68) He who in (Tao's) wars has skill Assumes no martial port; He who fights with most good will To rage makes no resort. He who vanquishes yet still Keeps from his foes apart; He whose hests men most fulfil Yet humbly plies his art. Thus we say, 'He ne'er contends, And therein is his might.' Thus we say, 'Men's wills he bends, That they with him unite.' Thus we say, 'Like Heaven's his ends, No sage of old more bright.'

[Note: hests are commands, orders.]

(69) A master of the art of war has said, 'I do not dare to be the host (to commence the war); I prefer to be the guest (to act on the defensive). I do not dare to advance an inch; I prefer to retire a foot.' This is called marshalling the ranks where there are no ranks; baring the arms (to fight) where there are no arms to bare; grasping the weapon where there is no weapon to grasp: advancing against the enemy where there is no enemy. There is no calamity greater than lightly engaging in war. To do that is near losing (the gentleness) which is so precious. Thus it is that when opposing weapons are (actually) crossed, he who deplors (the situation) conquers.

(70) My words are very easy to know, and very easy to practise; but there is no one in the world who is able to know and able to practise them. There is an originating and all-comprehending (principle) in my words, and an authoritative law for the things (which I enforce). It is because they do not know these, that men do not know me. They who know me are few, and I am on that account-(the more) to be prized. It is thus that the sage wears (a poor garb of) hair cloth, while he carries his (signet of) jade in his bosom.

(71) To know and yet (think) we do not know is the highest (attainment); not to know (and yet think) we do know is a disease. It is simply by being pained at (the thought of) having this disease that we are preserved from it. The sage has not the disease. He knows the pain that would be inseparable from it, and therefore he does not have it.

(72) When the people do not fear what they ought to fear, that which is their great dread will come on them. Let them not thoughtlessly indulge themselves in their ordinary life; let them not act as if weary of what that life depends on. It is by avoiding such indulgence that such weariness does not arise. Therefore the sage knows (these things) of himself, but does not parade (his knowledge); loves, but does not (appear to set a) value on, himself. And thus he puts the latter alternative away and makes choice of the former.

(73) He whose boldness appears in his daring (to do wrong, in defiance of the laws) is put to death; he whose boldness appears in this not daring (to do so) lives on. Of these two cases the one appears to be advantageous, and the other to be injurious. but

When Heaven's anger smites a man, Who the cause shall truly scan?

On this account the sage feels a difficulty (as to what to do in the former case). It is the way of Heaven not to strive, and yet it skillfully overcomes; not to speak, and yet it is skillful in (obtaining) a reply, does not call, and yet men come to it of themselves. Its demonstrations are quiet, and yet its plans are skilful and effective. The meshes of the net of

Heaven are large; far apart, but letting nothing escape.

(74) The people do not fear death; to what purpose is it to (try to) frighten them with death? If the people were always in awe of death, and I could always seize those who do wrong, and put them to death, who would dare to do wrong? There is always One who presides over the infliction of death. He who would inflict death in the room of him who so presides over it may be described as hewing wood instead of a great carpenter. Seldom is it that who undertakes the hewing, instead of the great carpenter, does not cut his own hands!

(75) The people suffer from famine because of the multitude of taxes consumed by their superiors. It is through this that they suffer famine. The people are difficult to govern because of the (excessive) agency of their superiors (in governing them). It is through this that they are difficult to govern. The people make light of dying because of the greatness of their labours in seeking for the means of living. It is this which makes them think light of dying. Thus it is that to leave the subject of living altogether out of view is better than to set a high value on it.

(76) Man at his birth is supple and weak: at his death, firm and strong. (so it is with) all things. Trees and plants, in their early growth, are soft and brittle; at their death, dry and withered. Thus it is that firmness and strength are the concomitants of death; softness and weakness, the concomitants of life. Hence he who (relies on) the strength of his forces does not conquer; and a tree which is strong will fill the outstretched arms, (and thereby invites the feller.) Therefore the place of what is firm and strong is below, and that of what is soft and weak is above.

(77) May not the Way (or Tao) of Heaven be compared to the (method of) bending a bow? The (part of the bow) which was high is brought low, and what was low is raised up. (So Heaven) diminishes where there is superabundance, and supplements where there is deficiency. It is the Way of Heaven to diminish superabundance, and supplement where there is deficiency. It is the Way of Heaven to diminish superabundance, and to supplement deficiency. It is not so with the way of man. He takes away from those who have not enough to add to his own superabundance. Who can take his own superabundance and therewith serve all under heaven? Only he who is in possession of the Tao! Therefore the (ruling) sage acts without claiming the results as his; he achieves his merit and does not rest (arrogantly) in it:-he does not wish to display his superiority.

(78) There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, and yet for attacking things that are firm and strong there is nothing that can take precedence of it;-for there is nothing (so effectual) for which it can be changed. Every one in the world knows that the soft overcomes the hard, and the weak the strong, but no one is able to carry it out in practice.

Therefore a sage has said

'He who accepts his state's reproach, Is altars' lord; To him who bears men's direful woes They all the name of King accord.'

Words that are strictly true seem to be paradoxical.

(79) When a reconciliation is effected (between two parties) after a great animosity, there is sure to be a grudge remaining (in the mind of the one who was wrong). And how can this be beneficial (to the other)? Therefore (to guard against this), the sage keeps the left-hand portion of the record of the engagement, and does not insist on the (speedy) fulfillment of it by the other party. (So), he who has the attributes (of the Tao) regards (only)

the conditions of the engagement, while he who has not those attributes regards only the conditions favourable to himself. In the Way of Heaven, there is no partiality of love; it is always on the side of the good man.

(80) In a little state with a small population, I would so order it, that, though there were individuals with the abilities of ten or a hundred men, there would be no employment of them; I would make the people, while looking on death as a grievous thing, yet not remove elsewhere (to avoid it). Though they had boats and carriages, they should have no occasion to ride in them; though they had buff coats and sharp weapons, they should have no occasion to don or use them. I would make the people return to the use of knotted cords (instead of the written characters). They should think their (coarse) food sweet: their (plain) clothes beautiful; their (poor) dwellings places of rest; and their common (simple) ways sources of enjoyment. There should be a neighboring state within sight, and the voices of the fowls and dogs should be heard all the way from it to us, but I would make the people to old age, even to death, not have any intercourse with it.

(81) Sincere words are not fine; fine words are not sincere. Those who are skilled (in the Tao) do not dispute (about it); the disputatious are not skilled in it. Those who know (the Tao) are not extensively learned; the extensively learned do not know it. The sage does not accumulate (for himself). The more that he expends for others, the more does he possess of his own; the more that he gives to others, the more does he have himself. With all the sharpness of the Way of Heaven, it injures not; with all the doing in the way of the sage he does not strive.

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