

Lao Tzu's  
**Tao-Teh-Ching**  
A Parallel Translation Collection

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## Brief Introduction

I have no intention of spouting off my various views on the philosophy of the elusive sage Lao Tzu. I merely wish to give a brief explanation for the work that is below this page.

While studying the text of the *Tao Teh Ching*, I became aware of the fact that not only are there a variety of English translations, but dependent upon each translation there seems to be a variety of depictions of the very thought of Lao Tzu -- that with each translation there rests a different philosophy. I do not wish to overstate this point, claiming that there is no philosophical consistency between translations, but I do wish to draw attention to the significant amount of interpretation inherent within the activity of translation -- particularly with so difficult text as the *Tao Teh Ching*.

Thus, beginning in May of 1994 I began to compile a "parallel translation" of the text -- eight translations in all -- so that I could compare these varieties of interpretation amongst the samplings that I chose.

My selections include those by John C. H. Wu, D. C. Lau, Wing-tsit Chan, Robert Henricks, Arthur Waley, Lin Yutang, Thomas Cleary, and Gia-fu Feng & Jane English. Three of my selections are "classic" translations (Lau, Waley, Lin), while another three are more recent works (Wu, Cleary, Feng & English). I chose Chan's translation due to his being both a sweeping scholar in Chinese philosophy as well as a Neo-Confucian. I chose Henricks translation due to its being from the *Ma-wang-tui* source texts (and a very good work).

Using this sampling, I thought that a comparative study could be worked -- which I hope to further pursue. In the mean time I am happy to have this stage of the work completed. I chose to personally type-enter these texts, as opposed to scanning, so that through the work I could become more familiar with this classic of Chinese philosophy.

I am very aware that I have reproduced copyrighted material, and as such I make no claim to the final product of my efforts. My intention was only to arrange materials in a way that would afford easier access for analysis.

Newton Centre, Massachusetts  
May 19, 1996

## Sources

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(Wu)--ONE

Tao can be talked about, but not the Eternal Tao.

Names can be named, but not the Eternal Name.

As the origin of heaven-and-earth, it is nameless;

As "the Mother" of all things, it is nameable.

So, as ever hidden, we should look at its inner essence:

As always manifest, we should look at its outer aspects.

These two flow from the same source, though differently named;

And both are called mysteries.

The Mystery of mysteries is the Door of all essence.

(Lau)

The way that can be spoken of Is not the constant way;

The name that can be named Is not the constant name.

The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth;

The named was the mother of the myriad creatures.

Hence always rid yourself of desires in order to observe its secrets;

But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its manifestations.

These two are the same but diverge in name as they issue forth.

Being the same they are called mysteries,

Mystery upon mystery--

The gateway of the manifold secrets.

(Chan)

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao;

The name that can be named is not the eternal name.

The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;

The Named is the mother of all things.

Therefore let there always be non-being so we may see their subtlety,

And let there always be being so we may see their outcome.

The two are the same, but after they are produced, they have different names.

They both may be called deep and profound.

Deeper and more profound,

The door of all subtleties!

(Henricks)

As for the Way, the Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way;

As for names, the name that can be spoken of is not the constant name.

The nameless is the beginning of the ten thousand things;

The named is the mother of the ten thousand things.

Therefore, those constantly without desires, by this means will perceive its subtlety.

Those constantly with desires, by this means will see only that which they yearn for and seek.

These two together emerge;

They have different name yet they're called the same;

That which is even more profound than the profound--

The gateway of all subtlety.

(Waley)

The Way that can be told is not an Unvarying Way;

The names that can be named are not unvarying names.

It was from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang;

The named is but the mother that rears the ten thousand creatures, each after its kind.

Truly, 'Only he that rids himself forever of desire can see the Secret Essences';

He that has never rid himself of desire can see only the Outcomes.

These two things issued from the same mould, but nevertheless are different in name.

This 'same mould' we can call the Mystery,

Or rather the 'Darker than any Mystery',

The Doorway whence issued all Secret Essences.

(Lin)

The Tao that can be told of is not the Absolute Tao;

The Names that can be given are not the Absolute Names.

The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;

The named is the Mother of All things.

Therefore:

Oftentimes, one strips oneself of passion in order to see the Secret of Life;

Oftentimes, one regards life with passion in order to see its manifest results.

These two (the Secret and its manifestations) are (in their nature) the same;

They are given different names when they become manifest.

They may both be called the Cosmic Mystery:

Reaching from the Mystery into the Deeper Mystery

Is the Gate to the Secret of All Life.

(Cleary)

A way can be a guide, but not a fixed path;

names can be given, but not permanent labels.

Nonbeing is called the beginning of heaven and earth;

being is called the mother of all things.

Always passionless, thereby observe the subtle; ever intent, thereby observe the apparent.

These two come from the same source but differ in name;

both are considered mysteries.

The mystery of mysteries is the gateway of marvels.

(Feng&English)

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.

The name that can be named is not the eternal name.

The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.

The named is the mother of ten thousand things.

Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.

Ever desiring, one sees the manifestations.

These two spring from the same source but differ in name;

this appears as darkness.

Darkness within darkness.

The gateway to all mystery.

(Wu)--TWO

When all the world recognizes beauty as beauty, this in itself is ugliness.

When all the world recognizes good as good, this in itself is evil.

Indeed, the hidden and the manifest give birth to each other.

Difficult and easy complement each other.

Long and short exhibit each other.

High and low set measure to each other.

Voice and sound harmonize each other.

Back and front follow each other.

Therefore, the Sage manages his affairs without ado,

And spreads his teaching without talking.

He denies nothing to the teeming things.

He rears them, but lays no claim to them.

He does his work, but sets no store by it.

He accomplishes his task, but does not dwell upon it.

And yet it is just because he does not dwell on it

That nobody can ever take it away from him.

(Lau)

The whole world recognizes the beautiful as the beautiful, yet this is only the ugly; the whole world recognizes the good as the good, yet this is only the bad.

Thus Something and Nothing produce each other;

The difficult and the easy complement each other;

The long and the short off-set each other;

The high and the low incline towards each other;

Note and sound harmonize with each other.

Therefore the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action and practices the teaching that uses no words.

The myriad creatures rise from it yet it claims no authority;

It gives them life yet claims no possession;

It benefits them yet exacts no gratitude;

It accomplishes its task yet lays claim to no merit.

It is because it lays claim to no merit

That its merit never deserts it.

(Chan)

When the people of the world all know beauty as beauty, there arises the recognition of ugliness.

When they all know the good as good, there arises the recognition of evil.

Therefore:

Being and non-being produce each other;

Difficult and easy complete each other;

Long and short contrast each other;

High and low distinguish each other;

Sound and voice harmonize each other;

Front and back follow each other.

Therefore the Sage manages affairs without action and spreads doctrine without words.

All things arise, and he does not turn away from them.

He produces them, but does not take possession of them.

He acts, but does not rely on his own ability.

He accomplishes his task but does not claim credit for it.

It is precisely because he does not claim credit that his accomplishment remains with him.

(Henricks)

When everyone in the world knows the beautiful as beautiful, ugliness comes into being.

When everyone knows the good, then the not good comes to be.

The mutual production of being and nonbeing,

The mutual completion of difficult and easy,

The mutual formation of long and short,

The mutual filling of high and low.

The mutual harmony of tone and voice,

The mutual following of front and back--

These are all constants.

Therefore the Sage dwells in nonactive affairs and practices the wordless teaching.

The ten thousand things arise, but he doesn't begin them;

He acts on their behalf, but he doesn't make them dependent;

He accomplishes his tasks, but he doesn't dwell on them;

It is only because he doesn't dwell on them that they therefore do not leave him.

(Waley)

It is because everything under Heaven recognizes beauty as beauty that the idea of ugliness exists.

And equally if every one recognizes virtue as virtue, this would merely create fresh conceptions of wickedness.

For truly 'Being and Not-being grow out of one another;

Difficult and easy complete one another.

Long and short test one another;

High and low determine one another.

Pitch and mode give harmony to one another.

Front and back give sequence to one another.

Therefore the Sage relies on actionless activity,

Carries on wordless teaching,

But the myriad creatures are worked upon by him; he does not disown them.

He rears them, but does not lay claim to them,

Controls them, but does not lean upon them,

Achieves his aims, but does not call attention to what he does;

And for the very reason that he does not call attention to what he does

He is not ejected from fruition of what he has done.

(Lin)

When the people of the Earth all know beauty as beauty, there arises (the recognition of) ugliness.

When the people of the Earth all know the good as good, there arises (the recognition of) evil).

Therefore:

Being and non-being interdepend in growth;

Difficult and easy interdepend in completion;

Long and short interdepend in contrast;

High and low interdepend in position;

Tones and voices interdepend in harmony;

Front and behind interdepend in company.

Therefore the Sage:

Manages the affairs without action;

Preaches the doctrine without words;

All things take their rise, but he does not turn away from them;

He gives them life, but does not take possession of them.

He acts, but does not appropriate;

Accomplishes but claims no credit.

It is because he lays claim to no credit

That the credit cannot be taken away from him.

(Cleary)

When everyone knows beauty is beauty, this is bad.

When everyone knows good is good is good, this is not good.

So being and nonbeing produce each other:

difficulty and ease complement each other,

long and short shape each other.

high and low contrast with each other,

voice and echoes conform to each other,

before and after go along with each other.

So sages manage effortless service and carry out unspoken guidance.

All beings work, without exception:

if they live without possessiveness,

act without presumption, and do not dwell on success,

then this very nondwelling success will not leave.

(Feng&English)

Under heaven all can see beauty as beauty only because there is ugliness.

All can know good as good only because there is evil.

Therefore having and not having arise together.

Difficult and easy complement each other.

Long and short contrast each other;

High and low rest upon each other;

Voice and sound harmonize each other;

Front and back follow one another.

Therefore the sage goes about doing nothing, teaching no-talking.

The ten thousand things rise and fall without cease.

Creating, yet not possessing.

Working yet not taking credit.

Work is done, then forgotten.

Therefore it lasts forever.

(Wu)--THREE

By not exalting the talented you will cause the people to cease from rivalry and contention.

By not prizing goods hard to get, you will cause the people to cease from robbing and stealing.

By not displaying what is desirable, you will cause the people's hearts to remain undisturbed.

Therefore the Sage's way of governing begins by  
Emptying the heart of desires,  
Filling the belly with food.  
Weakening the ambitions,  
Toughening the bones.

In this way he will cause the people to remain without knowledge and without desire, and prevent the knowing ones from any ado.

Practice Non-ado, and everything will be in order.

(Lau)

Not to honor men of worth will keep the people from contention; not to value goods which are hard to come by will keep them from theft;

not to display what is desirable will keep them from being unsettled of mind.

Therefore in governing the people,

the sage empties their minds but fills their bellies,  
weakens their wills but strengthens their bones.

He always keeps them innocent of knowledge and free from desire, and ensures that the clever never dare to act.

Do that which consists in taking no action, and order will prevail.

(Chan)

Do not exalt the worthy, so that the people shall not compete.

Do not value rare treasures, so that the people shall not steal.

Do not display objects of desire, so that the people's hearts shall not be disturbed.

Therefore in the government of the sage,

He keeps their hearts vacuous,  
Fills their bellies,  
Weakens their ambitions,  
And strengthens their bones,  
He always causes his people to be without knowledge (cunning) or desire,

And the crafty to be afraid to act.

By acting without action, all things will be in order.

(Henricks)

By not elevating the worthy, you bring it about that people will not compete.

By not valuing goods that are hard to obtain, you bring it about that people will not act like thieves.

By not displaying the desirable you bring it about that people will not be confused.

Therefore, in the government of the Sage:

He empties their minds,  
And fills their bellies.  
Weakens their ambition,  
And strengthens their bones.

He constantly causes the people to be without knowledge and without desires.

If he can bring it about that those with knowledge simply do not dare to act,

Then there is nothing that will not be in order.

(Waley)

If we stop looking for 'persons of superior morality' to put in power, there will be no more jealousies among the people.

If we cease to set store by products that are hard to get, there will be no more thieves. If the people never see such things as excite desire, their hearts will remain placid and undisturbed.

Therefore the Sage rules  
By emptying their hearts  
And filling their bellies,  
Weakening their intelligence  
And toughening their sinews  
Ever striving to make the people  
knowledgeless and desireless.

Indeed he sees to it that if there be any who have knowledge, they dare not interfere.

Yet through his actionless activity all things are duly regulated.

(Lin)

Exalt not the wise, so that the people shall not scheme and contend;

Prize not rare objects, so that the people shall not steal;

Shut out from sight the things of desire.

So that the people's hearts shall not be disturbed.

Therefore in the government of the Sage:

He keeps empty their hearts  
Makes full their bellies,  
Discourages their ambitions,  
Strengthens their frames;

So that the people may be purified of their thoughts and desires.

And the cunning ones shall not presume to interfere.

By action without deeds  
May all live in peace.

(Cleary)

Not exalting cleverness causes the people not to contend.

Not putting high prices on hard-to-get goods causes the people not to steal.

Not seeing anything to want cause the mind not to be confused.

Therefore the government of the sages  
empties the mind and fills the middle,

weakens the ambition and strengthens the bones,  
always keeping the people innocent and passionless.

It makes the sophisticated not dare to contrive;  
action being without contrivance,  
nothing is disordered.

(Feng&English)

Not exalting the gifted prevents quarreling.

Not collecting treasures prevents stealing.

Not seeing desirable things prevents confusion of the heart.

The wise therefore rule by emptying hearts and stuffing bellies,

by weakening ambitions and strengthening bones.

If men lack knowledge and desire, then clever people will not try to interfere.

If nothing is done, then all will be well.



(Wu)--FOUR

The Tao is like an empty bowl.  
Which in being used can never be  
filled up.

Fathomless, it seems to be the  
origin of all things.

It blunts all sharp edges.

It unties all tangles.

It harmonizes all lights.

It unites the world into one  
whole.

Hidden in the deeps.

Yet it seems to exist forever.

I do not know whose child it is;

It seems to be the common  
ancestor of all, the father of things.

(Lau)

The Way is empty, yet use will  
not drain it.

Deep, it is like the ancestor of the  
myriad creatures.

Blunt the sharpness;

Untangle the knots;

Soften the glare;

Let your wheels move only along  
old ruts.

Darkly visible, it only seems as if  
it were there.

I know not whose son it is.

It images the forefather of God.

(Chan)

Tao is empty (like a bowl).  
It may be used but its capacity is  
never exhausted.

It is bottomless, perhaps the  
ancestor of all things.

It blunts its sharpness.

It unties its tangles.

It softens its light.

It becomes one with the dusty  
world.

Deep and still, it appears to exist  
forever.

I do not know whose son it is.

It seems to have existed before  
the Lord.

(Henricks)

The Way is empty;  
Yet when you use it, you never  
need fill it again.

Like an abyss! It seems to be the  
ancestor of the ten thousand  
things.

It files down sharp edges;

Unties the tangles;

Softens the glare;

And settles the dust.

Submerged! It seems perhaps to  
exist.

We don't know whose child it is;

It seems to have even preceded  
the Lord.

(Waley)

The Way is like an empty vessel  
That yet may be drawn from  
Without ever needing to be filled.  
It is bottomless; the very  
progenitor of all things in the  
world.

In it all sharpness is blunted,  
All tangles untied,  
All glare tempered,  
All dust smoothed.  
It is like a deep pool that never  
dries.

Was it too the child of something  
else? We cannot tell.

But as a substanceless image it  
existed before the Ancestor.

(Lin)

Tao is all-pervading, and its use  
is inexhaustible!

Fathomless!  
Like a fountain head of all  
things.

Its sharp edges rounded off.  
Its tangles untied.  
Its light tempered.

Its turmoil submerged.  
Yet crystal clear like still water it  
seems to remain.

I do not know whose Son it is,  
An image of what existed before  
God.

(Cleary)

The Way is unimpeded harmony;  
its potential may never be fully  
exploited.

It is as deep as the source of all  
things:

it blunts the edges,  
resolves the complications,  
harmonizes the light,  
assimilates to the world.

Profoundly still; it seems to be  
there:

I don't know whose child it is,  
before the creation of images.

(Feng&English)

The Tao is an empty vessel; it is  
used, but never filled.

Oh, unfathomable source of ten  
thousand things!

Blunt the sharpness.

Untangle the knot.

Soften the glare.

Merge with dust.

Oh, hidden deep but ever present!

I do not know from whence it  
comes.

It is the forefather of the gods.

(Wu)--FIVE

Heaven-and-Earth is not  
sentimental;  
It treats all things as straw-dogs.  
The Sage is not sentimental;  
He treats all his people as straw-  
dogs.  
Between Heaven and Earth.  
There seems to be a Bellows:  
It is empty, and yet it is  
inexhaustible;  
The more it works, the more  
comes out of it.  
No amount of words can fathom  
it:  
Better look for it within you.

(Lau)

Heaven and earth are ruthless,  
and treat the myriad creatures as  
straw dogs;  
the sage is ruthless, and treats the  
people as straw dogs.  
Is not the space between heaven  
and earth like a bellows?  
It is empty without being  
exhausted:  
The more it works the more  
comes out.  
Much speech leads inevitably to  
silence.  
Better to hold fast to the void.

(Chan)

Heaven and earth are not  
humane.  
They regard all things as straw  
dogs.  
The sage is not humane.  
He regards all people as straw  
dogs.  
How Heaven and Earth are like a  
bellows!  
While vacuous, it is never  
exhausted.  
When active, it produces even  
more.  
Much talk will of course come to  
a dead end.  
It is better to keep to the center.

(Henricks)

Heaven and Earth are not  
humane;  
They regard the ten thousand  
things as straw dogs.  
The Sage is not humane;  
He regards the common people  
as straw dogs.  
The space between Heaven and  
Earth--is it not like a bellows?  
It is empty and yet not depleted;  
Move it and more always comes  
out.  
Much learning means frequent  
exhaustion.  
That's not so good as holding to  
the mean.

(Waley)

Heaven and Earth are ruthless;  
To them the Ten Thousand  
Things are but as straw dogs.

The Sage too is ruthless;  
To him the people are but as  
straw dogs.

Yet Heaven and Earth and all  
that lies between is like a bellows  
In that it is empty, but gives a  
supply that never fails.

Work it, and more comes out.  
Whereas the force of words is  
soon spent.

Far better to keep what is in the  
heart.

(Lin)

Nature is unkind:  
It treats the creation like  
sacrificial straw-dogs.

The Sage is unkind:  
He treats the people like  
sacrificial straw-dogs.

How the universe is like a  
bellows!

Empty, yet it gives a supply that  
never fails;

The more it is worked, the more  
it brings forth.

By many words is wit exhausted.  
Rather, therefore, hold to the  
core.

(Cleary)

Heaven and earth are not  
humane;

They regard all beings as straw  
dogs.

Sages are not humane;  
they see all people as straw dogs.

The space between heaven and  
earth is like bellows and pipes.

empty yet inexhaustible,  
producing more with movement.

The talkative reach their wits'  
end again and again;

that is not as good as keeping  
centered.

(Feng&English)

Heaven and earth are impartial;  
They see the ten thousand things  
as straw dogs.

The wise are impartial;  
They see the people as straw  
dogs.

The space between heaven and  
earth is like a bellows.

The shape changes but not the  
form;

The more it moves, the more it  
yields.

More words count less.  
Hold fast to the center.

(Wu)--SIX

The Spirit of the Fountain dies  
not.

It is called the Mysterious  
Feminine.

The Doorway of the Mysterious  
Feminine

Is called the Root of Heaven-  
and-Earth.

Lingering like gossamer, it has  
only a hint of existence;

And yet when you draw upon it,  
it is inexhaustible.

(Lau)

The spirit of the valley never  
dies.

This is called the mysterious  
female.

The gateway of the mysterious  
female

Is called the root of heaven and  
earth.

Dimly visible, it seems as if it  
were there,

Yet use will never drain it.

(Chan)

The spirit of the valley never  
dies.

It is called the subtle and  
profound female.

The gate of the subtle and  
profound female

Is the root of Heaven and Earth.

It is continuous, and seems to be  
always existing.

Use it and you will never wear it  
out.

(Henricks)

The valley spirit never dies;  
We call it the mysterious female.

The gates of the mysterious  
female--

These we call the roots of  
Heaven and Earth.

Subtle yet everlasting! It seems  
to exist.

In being used, it is not exhausted.

(Waley)

The Valley Spirit never dies.

It is named the Mysterious  
Female.

And the Doorway to the  
Mysterious Female

Is the base from which Heaven  
and Earth sprang.

It is there within us all the while;

Draw upon it as you will, it  
never runs dry.

(Lin)

The Spirit of the Valley never  
dies.

It is called the Mystic Female.

The Door of the Mystic Female

Is the root of Heaven and Earth.

Continuously, continuously,

It seems to remain.

Draw upon it

And it serves you with ease.

(Cleary)

The valley Spirit not dying

is called the mysterious female.

The opening of the mysterious  
female

is called the root of heaven and  
earth.

Continuous, on the brink of  
existence,

to put it into practice, don't try to  
force it.

(Feng&English)

The valley spirit never dies:

It is the woman, primal mother.

Her gateway is the root of  
heaven and earth.

It is like a veil barely seen.

Use it; it will never fail.

(Wu)--SEVEN

Heaven lasts long, and Earth abides.

What is the secret of their durability?

Is it not because they do not live for themselves

That they can live so long?

Therefore, the Sage wants to remain behind.

But finds himself at the head of others;

Reckons himself out,

But finds himself safe and secure.

Is it not because he is selfless

That his Self is realized?

(Lau)

Heaven and earth are enduring.

The reason why heaven and earth can be enduring

is that they do not give themselves life.

Hence they are able to be long-lived.

Therefore the sage puts his person last and it comes first.

Treats it as extraneous to himself and it is preserved.

Is it not because he is without thought of self

that he is able to accomplish his private ends?

(Chan)

Heaven is eternal and Earth everlasting.

They can be eternal and everlasting

because they do not exist for themselves.

And for this reason can exist forever.

Therefore the sage places himself in the background, but finds himself in the foreground.

He puts himself away, and yet he always remains.

Is it not because he has no personal interests?

This is the reason why his personal interests are fulfilled.

(Henricks)

Heaven endures; Earth lasts a long time.

The reason why Heaven and Earth can endure and last a long time--

Is that they do not live for themselves.

Therefore they can endure.

Therefore the Sage:

Puts himself in the background yet finds himself in the foreground;

Puts self-concern out of his mind, yet finds that his self-concern is preserved.

Is it not because he has no self-interest,

That he is therefore able to realize his self-interest?

(Waley)

Heaven is eternal, the Earth  
everlasting.

How come they to be so? It is  
because they do not foster their  
own lives;

That is why they live so long.

Therefore the Sage

Puts himself in the background;  
but is always to the fore.

Remains outside; but is always  
there.

Is it because he does not strive  
for any personal end

That all his personal ends are  
fulfilled?

(Lin)

The universe is everlasting.

The reason the universe is  
everlasting

Is that it does not live for Self.

Therefore it can long endure.

Therefore the Sage puts himself  
last.

And finds himself in the foremost  
place;

Regards his body as accidental,

And his body is thereby  
preserved.

Is it not because he does not live  
for Self

That his Self achieves  
perfection?

(Cleary)

Heaven is eternal. earth is  
everlasting.

The reason they can be eternal  
and everlasting

is that they do not foster  
themselves;

that is why they can live forever.

For this reason sages put  
themselves last.

and they were first;  
they excluded themselves,  
and they survived.

Was it not by their very  
selflessness

that they managed to fulfill  
themselves?

(Feng&English)

Heaven and Earth last forever.  
Why do heaven and earth last  
forever?

They are unborn.

So ever living.

The sage stays behind, thus he is  
ahead.

He is detached, thus at one with  
all.

Through selfless action, he  
attains fulfillment.



(Wu)--EIGHT

The highest form of goodness is like water.

Water knows how to benefit all things without striving with them.

It stays in places loathed by all men.

Therefore, it comes near the Tao.

In choosing your dwelling, know how to keep to the ground.

In cultivating your mind, know how to dive in the hidden deeps.

In dealing with others, know how to be gentle and kind.

In speaking, know how to keep your words.

In governing, know how to maintain order.

In transacting business, know how to be efficient.

In making a move, know how to choose the right moment.

If you do not strive with others,

You will be free from blame.

(Lau)

Highest good is like water.

Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settle where non would like to be.

it comes close to the way.

In a home it is the site that matters;

In quality of mind it is depth that matters;

In an ally it is benevolence that matters;

In speech it is good faith that matters;

In government it is order that matters;

In affairs it is ability that matters;

In action it is timeliness that matters.

It is because it does not contend that it is never at fault.

(Chan)

The best (man) is like water.

Water is good; it benefits all things and does not compete with them.

It dwells in (lowly) places that all disdain.

That is why it is so near to Tao.

[The best man] in his dwelling loves the earth.

In his heart, he love what is profound.

In his associations, he love humanity.

In his words, he loves faithfulness.

In government, he loves order.

In handling affairs, he love competence.

In his activities, he love timeliness.

It is because he does not compete that he is without reproach.

(Henricks)

The highest good is like water; Water is good at benefiting the ten thousand things and yet it does not compete with them.

It dwells in places the masses of people detest.

Therefore it is close to the Way.

In dwelling, the good thing is the land.

In the mind, the good thing is depth;

In giving, the good thing is being like Heaven;

In speaking, the good thing is sincerity;

In governing the good thing is ability;

In activity, the good thing is timeliness.

It is because it does not compete, that therefore it is without fault.

(Waley)

The highest good is like that of water.

The goodness of water is that it benefits the ten thousand creatures; yet itself does not scramble.

but is content with the places that all men disdain.

It is this that makes water so near to the Way.

And if men think the ground the best place for building a house upon.

If among thoughts they value those that are profound.

If in friendship they value gentleness,

In words, truth;

in government, good order;

In deeds, effectiveness;

in actions, timeliness--

In each case it is because they prefer what does not lead to strife,

And therefore does not go amiss.

(Lin)

The best of men is like water;

Water benefits all things and does not compete with them.

It dwells in (the lowly) places that all disdain.--

Wherein it comes near to the Tao.

In his dwelling, (the Sage) loves the (lowly) earth;

In his heart, he loves what is profound;

In his relations with others, he loves kindness;

In his words, he loves sincerity;

In his government, he loves

peace;

In business affairs, he loves ability;

In his actions, he loves choosing the right time.

It is because he does not contend

That he is without reproach.

(Cleary)

Higher good is like water:

the good in water benefits all,

and does so without contention.

It rests where people dislike to be.

so it is close to the Way.

Where it dwells becomes good ground;

profound is the good in its heart.

benevolent to good it bestows.

Goodness in words is

trustworthiness,

goodness in government is order;

goodness in work is ability,

goodness in action is timeliness.

But only by noncontention

is there nothing extreme.

(Feng&English)

The highest good is like water.

Water gives life to the ten thousand things and does not strive.

It flows in places men reject and so is like the Tao.

In dwelling, be close to the land.

In meditation, go deep in the heart.

In dealing with others, be gentle and kind.

In speech, be true.

In ruling, be just.

In daily life, be competent.

In action, be aware of the time and the season.

No fight: No blame.

(Wu)--NINE

As for holding to fullness.  
Far better were it to stop in time!  
Keep on beating and sharpening  
a sword.  
And the edge cannot be preserved  
for long.  
Fill your house with gold and  
jade.  
And it can no longer be guarded.  
Set store by your riches and  
honour,  
And you will reap a crop of  
calamities.  
Here is the Way of Heaven:  
*When you have done your work,  
retire!*

(Lau).

Rather than fill the brim by  
keeping it upright  
Better to stop in time;  
Hammer it to a point  
And the sharpness cannot be  
preserved for ever;  
There may be gold and jade to  
fill a hall  
But there is non who can keep  
them.  
To be overbearing when one has  
wealth and position  
Is to bring calamity upon oneself.  
To retire when the task is  
accomplished  
Is the way of heaven.

(Chan)

To hold and fill to overflowing  
Is not as good as to stop in time.  
Sharpen a sword-edge it its  
sharpest,  
And the (edge) will not last long.  
When gold and jade fill the hall,  
You will not be able to keep  
them.  
To be proud with honor and  
wealth  
Is to cause one's own downfall.  
Withdraw as soon as your work  
is done.  
Such is Heaven's Way.

(Henricks)

To hold upright and fill it,  
Is not so good as stopping in  
time.  
When you pound it out and give  
it a point,  
It won't be preserved very long.  
When gold and jade fill your  
rooms,  
You'll never be able to protect  
them.  
Arrogance and pride with wealth  
and rank,  
On their own bring on disaster.  
When the deed is accomplished  
you retire;  
Such is Heaven's Way!

(Waley)

Stretch a bow to the very full.  
And you will wish that you had  
stopped in time:  
Temper a sword-edge to its very  
sharpest.  
And you will find it soon grows  
dull.  
When bronze and jade fill your  
hall  
It can no longer be guarded.  
Wealth and place breed insolence  
That brings ruin in its train.  
When your work is done, then  
withdraw!  
Such is Heaven's Way.

(Lin)

Stretch (a bow) to the very full.  
And you will wish you had  
stopped in time.  
Temper a (sword-edge) to its  
very sharpest.  
And the edge will not last long.  
When gold and jade fill your hall.  
You will not be able to keep  
them safe.  
To be proud with wealth and  
honor  
Is to sow the seeds of one's own  
downfall.  
Retire when your work is done.  
Such is Heaven's way.

(Cleary)

To keep on filling  
is not as good as stopping.  
Calculated sharpness  
cannot be kept for long.  
Though gold and jewels fill their  
houses.  
no one can keep them.  
When the rich upper classes are  
haughty,  
their legacy indicts them.  
When one's work is  
accomplished honorably,  
to retire is the Way of Heaven.

(Feng&English)

Better stop short than fill to the  
brim.  
Oversharpen the blade, and the  
edge will soon blunt.  
Amass a store of gold and jade,  
and no one can protect it.  
Claim wealth and titles, and  
disaster will follow.  
Retire when work is done.  
This is the way of Heaven.

(Wu)--TEN

In keeping the spirit and the vital soul together.

Are you able to maintain their perfect harmony?

In gathering your vital energy to attain suppleness.

Have you reached the state of a new-born babe?

In washing and clearing your inner vision,

Have you purified it of all dross?

In loving your people and governing your state,

Are you able to dispense with cleverness?

In the opening and shutting of heaven's gate,

Are you able to play the feminine part?

Enlightened and seeing far into all directions,

Can you at the same time remain detached and non-active?

Rear your people!

Feed your people!

Rear them without claiming them for you own!

Do you work without setting any store by it!

Be a leader, not a butcher!

This is called the hidden Virtue.

(Lau)

When carrying on your head your perplexed bodily soul can you embrace in your arms the One

And not let go?

In concentrating your breath can you become as supple

As a babe?

Can you polish your mysterious mirror

And leave no blemish?

Can you love the people and govern the state

Without resorting to action?

When the gates of heaven open and shut

Are you capable of keeping to the role of the female?

When your discernment penetrates the four quarters

Are you capable of not knowing anything?

It gives them life and rears them.

It gives them life yet claims no possession;

It benefits them yet exacts no gratitude;

It is the steward yet exercises no authority.

Such is called the mysterious virtue.

(Chan)

Can you keep the spirit and embrace the One without departing from them?

Can you concentrate your vital force (*ch'i*) and achieve the highest degree of weakness like an infant?

Can you clean and purify your profound insight so it will be spotless?

Can you love the people and govern the state without knowledge (cunning)?

Can you play the role of the feminine in the opening and closing of the gates of Heaven?

Can you understand all and penetrate all without taking any action?

To produce things and to rear them,

To produce, but not to take possession of them,

To act, but not to rely on one's own ability,

To lead them, but not to master them--

This is called the profound and secret virtue (*hsian-te*).

(Henricks)

In nourishing the soul and embracing the One--can you do it without letting them leave?

In concentrating your breath and making it soft--can you make it like that of a child?

In cultivating and cleaning your profound mirror--can you do it so that it has no blemish?

In loving the people and giving life to the state--can you do it without using knowledge?

In opening and closing the gates of Heaven--can you play the part of the female?

In understanding all within the four reaches--can you do it without using knowledge?

Give birth to them and nourish them.

Give birth to them and don't try to own them;

Help them to grow and don't rule them.

This is called Profound Virtue.

(Waley)

Can you keep the unquiet  
physical-coil from straying, hold  
fast to the unity, and never quit?

Can you, when concentrating  
your breath, make it soft like that  
of a little child?

Can you wipe and cleanse your  
vision of the Mystery till all is  
without blur?

Can you love the people and rule  
the land, yet remain unknown?

Can you in opening and shutting  
the heavenly gates play always the  
female part?

Can your mind penetrate every  
corner of the land, but you  
yourself never interfere?

Rear them, then, feed them,

Rear them, but do not lay claim  
to them.

Control them, but never lean  
upon them;

Be chief among them, but do not  
manage them.

This is called the Mysterious  
Power.

(Lin)

In embracing the One with your  
soul.

Can you never forsake the Tao?

In controlling your vital force to  
achieve gentleness,

Can you become like the new-  
born child?

In cleansing and purifying your  
Mystic vision,

Can you strive after perfection?

In loving the people and  
governing the kingdom,

Can you rule without  
interference?

In opening and shutting the Gates  
of Heaven,

Can you play the part of the  
Female?

In comprehending all knowledge,

Can you renounce the mind?

To give birth, to nourish,

To give birth without taking  
possession,

To act without appropriation,

To be chief among men without  
managing them--

This is the Mystic Virtue.

(Cleary)

Carrying vitality and  
consciousness,

embracing them as one,

can you keep them from parting?

Concentrating energy,  
making it supple,

can you be like an infant?

Purifying hidden perception,

can you make it flawless?

Loving the people, governing the  
nation,

can you be uncontrived?

As the gate of heaven opens and  
closes,

can you be impassive?

As understanding reaches

everywhere,

can you be innocent?

Producing and developing,

producing without possessing,

doing without presuming,

growing without domineering:

this is called mysterious power.

(Feng&English)

Carrying body and soul and  
embracing the one.

Can you avoid separation?

Attending fully and becoming  
supple.

Can you be as a newborn babe?

Washing and cleansing the  
primal vision.

Can you be without stain?

Loving all men and ruling the  
country,

Can you be without cleverness?

Opening and closing the gates of  
heaven.

Can you play the role of a  
woman?

Understanding and being open to  
all things,

Are you able to do nothing?

Giving birth and nourishing,

Bearing yet not possessing,

Working yet not taking credit,

Leading yet not dominating,

This is the Primal Virtue.

(Wu)--ELEVEN

Thirty spokes converge upon an  
single hub;

It is on the hole in the center that  
the use of the cart hinges.

We make a vessel from a lump of  
clay;

It is the empty space within the  
vessel that makes it useful.

We make doors and windows for  
a room;

But it is these empty spaces that  
make the room livable.

Thus, while the tangible has  
advantages.

It is the intangible that makes it  
useful.

(Lau)

Thirty spokes  
Share one hub.

Adapt the nothing therein to the  
purpose in hand, and you will have  
the use of the cart.

Knead clay in order to make a  
vessel. Adapt the nothing therein to  
the purpose at hand, and you will  
have the use of the vessel.

Cut out doors and windows in  
order to make a room. Adapt the  
nothing therein to the purpose in  
hand, and you will have the use of  
the room.

Thus what we gain is Something,  
yet it is by virtue of Nothing that  
this can be put to use.

(Chan)

Thirty spokes are united around  
the hub to make a wheel.

But it is on its non-being that the  
utility of the carriage depends.

Clay is molded to form a utensil.  
But it is on its non-being that the  
utility of the utensil depends.

Doors and windows are cut out  
to make a room.

But it is on its non-being that the  
utility of the room depends.

Therefore turn being into  
advantage, and turn non-being into  
utility.

(Henricks)

Thirty spokes unite in one hub:  
It is precisely where there's no  
substance, that we find the  
usefulness of the wheel.

We fire clay and make vessels;  
It is precisely where there's no  
substance, that we find the  
usefulness of clay pots.

We chisel out doors and  
windows;

It is precisely in these empty  
spaces, that we find the usefulness  
of the room.

Therefore, we regard having  
something as beneficial;

But having nothing is useful.

(Waley)

We put thirty spokes together  
and call it a wheel;

But it is on the space where there  
is nothing that the usefulness of the  
wheel depends.

We turn clay to make a vessel;

But it is on the space where there  
is nothing that the usefulness of the  
vessel depends.

We pierce doors and windows to  
make a house;

And it is on these spaces where  
there is nothing that the usefulness  
of the house depends.

Therefore just as we take  
advantage of what is, we should  
recognize the usefulness of what is  
not.

(Lin)

Thirty spokes unite around the  
nave;

From their not-being (losing of  
their individuality) arises the utility  
of the wheel.

Mould clay into a vessel;

From its not-being (in the vessel's  
hollow) arises the utility of the  
vessel.

Cut out doors and windows in  
the house (-wall),

From their not-being (empty-  
space) arises the utility of the  
house.

Therefore by the existence of  
things we profit.

And by the non-existence of  
things we are served.

(Cleary)

Thirty spokes join at the hub;  
their use for the cart is where  
they are not.

When the potter's wheel makes a  
pot.

the use of the pot is precisely  
where there is nothing.

When you open doors and  
windows for a room,

it is where there is nothing that  
they are useful to the room.

Therefore being is for benefit,  
Nonbeing is for usefulness.

(Feng&English)

Thirty spokes share the wheel's  
hub;

It is the center hole that makes it  
useful.

Shape clay into a vessel;

It is the space within that makes  
it useful.

Cut doors and windows for a  
room;

It is the holes which make it  
useful.

Therefore benefit comes from  
what is there;

Usefulness from what is not  
there.



(Wu)--TWELVE

The five colours blind the eye.

The five tones deafen the ear.

The five flavours cloy the palate.

Racing and hunting madden the mind.

Rare goods tempt men to do wrong.

Therefore, the Sage takes care of the belly, not the eye.

He prefers what is within to what is without.

(Lau)

The five colours make man's eyes blind;

The five notes make his ears deaf;

The five tastes injure his palate;

Riding and hunting make his mind go wild with excitement;

Goods hard to come by serve to hinder his progress.

Hence the sage is for the belly, not for the eye.

Therefore he discards the one and takes the other.

(Chan)

The five colors cause one's eyes to be blind.

The five tones cause one's ears to be deaf.

The five flavors cause one's palate to be spoiled.

Racing and hunting cause one's mind to be mad.

Goods that are hard to get injure one's activities.

For this reason the sage is concerned with the belly and not the eyes.

Therefore he rejects the one but accepts the other.

(Henricks)

The five colors cause one's eyes to go blind.

Racing horses and hunting cause one's mind to go mad.

Goods that are hard to obtain pose an obstacle to one's travels.

The five flavors confuse one's palate.

The five tones cause one's ears to go deaf.

Therefore, in the government of the Sage:

He's for the belly and not for the eyes.

Thus he rejects that and takes this.

(Waley)

The five colours confuse the eye.  
The five sounds dull the ear.  
The five tastes spoil the palate.  
Excess of hunting and chasing  
makes minds go mad.

Products that are hard to get  
impede their owner's movements.

Therefore the Sage considers the  
belly not the eye.

Truly, 'he rejects that but takes  
this'.

(Lin)

The five colors blind the eyes of  
man;

The five musical notes deafen the  
ears of man:

The five flavors dull the taste of  
man;

Horse-racing, hunting and  
chasing madden the minds of man;

Rare, valuable goods keep their  
owners awake at night.

Therefore the Sage provides for  
the belly and not for the eye.

Hence, he rejects the one and  
accepts the other.

(Cleary)

Colors blind the people's eyes.  
sounds deafen their ears;  
flavors spoil people's palates.  
the chase and the hunt craze  
people's minds:

goods hard to obtain make  
people's actions harmful.

Therefore the sages work for the  
middle and not the eyes,

leaving the latter and taking the  
former.

(Feng&English)

The five colors blind the eye.  
The five tones deafen the ear.  
The five flavors dull the taste.  
Racing and hunting madden the  
mind.

Precious things lead one astray.  
Therefore the sage is guided by  
what he feels and not by what he  
sees.

He lets go of that and chooses  
this.

(Wu)--THIRTEEN

"Welcome disgrace as a pleasant surprise.

Prize calamities as your own body."

Why should we "welcome disgrace as a pleasant surprise"?

Because a lowly state is a boon: Getting it is a pleasant surprise.

And so is losing it!

That is why we should "welcome disgrace as a pleasant surprise."

Why should we "prize calamity as our own body"?

Because our body is the very source of our calamities.

If we have no body, what calamities can we have?

Hence, only he who is willing to give his body for the sake of the world is fit to be entrusted with the world.

Only he who can do it with love is worthy of being steward of the world.

(Lau)

Favour and disgrace are things that startle;

High rank is, like one's body, a source of great trouble.

What is meant by saying that favour and disgrace are things that startle?

Favour when it is bestowed on a subject serves to startle as much as when it is withdrawn.

That is what is meant by saying that favour and disgrace are things that startle.

What is meant by saying that high rank is, like one's body, a source of great trouble?

The reason I have great trouble is that I have a body.

When I no longer have a body, what trouble have I?

Hence he who values his body more than dominion over the empire can be entrusted with the empire.

He who loves his body more than dominion over the empire can be given custody of the empire.

(Chan)

Be apprehensive when receiving favor or disgrace.

Regard trouble as seriously as you regard your body.

What is meant by being apprehensive when receiving favor or disgrace?

Favor is inferior.

Be apprehensive when you receive them and also be apprehensive when you lose them.

That is what is meant by being apprehensive when receiving favor or disgrace.

What does it mean to regard great trouble as seriously as you regard your body?

The reason why I have great trouble is that I have a body (and am attached to it).

If I have no body, what trouble could come?

Therefore he who values the world as his body may be entrusted with the empire.

He who loves the world as his body may be entrusted with the empire.

(Henricks)

"Regard favor and disgrace with alarm."

"Respect great distress as you do your own person."

What do I mean when I say "Regard favor and disgrace with alarm?"

Favor is inferior.

If you get it--be alarmed!

If you lose it--be alarmed!

This is what is meant when I say "Regard favor and disgrace with alarm."

What do I mean when I say "Respect great distress as you do your own person"?

The reason why I have great distress is that I have a body.

If I had no body, what distress would I have?

Therefore, to one who values acting for himself over acting on behalf of the world, you can entrust the world.

And to one who in being parsimonious regards his person as equal to the world, you can turn over the world.

(Waley)

'Favour and disgrace goad as it were to madness;

high rank hurts keenly as our bodies hurt.'

What does it mean to say that favour and disgrace goad as it were to madness?

It means that when they lose it they turn distraught.

That is what is meant by saying favour and disgrace goad as it were to madness.

What does it mean to say that high rank hurts keenly as our bodies hurt?

The only reason that we suffer hurt is that we have bodies; if we had no bodies, how could we suffer?

Therefore we may accept the saying: 'He who in dealing with the empire regards his high rank as though it were his body is the best person to be entrusted with rule; he who in dealing with the empire loves his subjects as one should love one's body is the best person to whom one can commit the empire.'

(Lin)

"Favor and disgrace cause one dismay;

What we value and what we fear are as if within our Self."

What does this mean: "Favor and disgrace cause one dismay?"

Those who receive a favor from above are dismayed when they receive it, and dismayed when they lose it.

What does it mean: "What we value and what we fear are as if within our Self?"

We have fears because we have a self.

When we do not regard that self as self,

What have we to fear?

Therefore he who values the world as his self may then be entrusted with the government of the world;

And he who loves the world as his self--the world may then be entrusted to his care.

(Cleary)

Favor and disgrace seem alarming;

high status greatly afflicts your person.

What are favor and disgrace?

Favor is the lower:

get it and you're surprised,

lose it and you're startled.

This means favor and disgrace are alarming.

Why does high status greatly afflict your person?

The reason we have a lot of trouble is that we have selves.

If we had no selves, what troubles would we have?

Therefore those who embody nobility to act for the sake of the world seem to be able to draw the world to them,

while those who embody love to act for the sake of the world seem to be worthy of the trust of the world.

(Feng&English)

Accept disgrace willingly.

Accept misfortune as the human condition.

What do you mean by "Accept disgrace willingly"?

Accept being unimportant.

Do not be concerned with loss or gain.

This is called "accepting disgrace willingly."

What do you mean by "Accept misfortune as the human condition"?

Misfortune comes from having a body.

Without a body, how could there be misfortune?

Surrender yourself humbly; then you can be entrusted to care for all things.

Love the world as your own self: then you can truly care for all things.

(Wu)--FOURTEEN

Look at it but you cannot see it!  
Its name is *Formless*.  
Listen to it but you cannot hear  
it!  
Its name is *Soundless*.  
Grasp it but you cannot get it!  
Its name is *Incorporeal*.  
These three attributes are  
unfathomable;  
Therefore they fuse into one.  
Its upper side is not bright:  
Its under side not dim.  
Continually the Unnameable  
moves on,  
Until it returns beyond the realm  
of things.  
We call it the formless Form, the  
imageless Image.  
We call it the indefinable and  
unimaginable.  
Confront it and you do not see its  
face!  
Follow it and you do not see its  
back!  
Yet, equipped with this timeless  
Tao.  
You can harness present realities.  
To know the origins is initiation  
into the Tao.

(Lau)

What cannot be seen is called  
evanescent;  
What cannot be heard is called  
rarefied;  
What cannot be touched is called  
minute.  
These three cannot be fathomed  
And so they are confused and  
looked upon as one.  
Its upper part is not dazzling;  
Its lower part is not obscure.  
Dimly visible, it cannot be named  
And returns to that which is  
without substance.  
This is called the shape that has  
no shape.  
The image that is without  
substance.  
This is called the indistinct and  
shadowy.  
Go up to it and you will not see  
its head;  
Follow behind it and you will not  
see its rear.  
Hold fast to the way of antiquity  
In order to keep in control of the  
realm today.  
The ability to know the beginning  
of antiquity  
Is called the thread running  
through the way.

(Chan)

We look at it and do not see it;  
Its name is The Invisible.  
We listen to it and do not hear it;  
Its name is The Inaudible.  
We touch it and do not find it;  
Its name is The Subtle  
(formless).  
These three cannot be further  
inquired into.  
And hence merge into one.  
Going up high, it is not bright,  
and coming down low, it is not  
dark.  
Infinite and boundless, it cannot  
be given any name;  
It reverts to nothingness.  
This is called shape without  
shape,  
Form (*hsiang*) without object.  
It is The Vague and Elusive.  
Meet it and you will not see its  
head.  
Follow it and you will not see its  
back.  
Hold onto the Tao of old in order  
to master the things of the present.  
From this one may know the  
primeval beginning [of the  
universe].  
This is called the bond of Tao.

(Henricks)

We look at it but do not see it;  
We name this the "minute."  
We listen to it but do not hear it;  
We name this "the rarefied".  
We touch it but do not hold it;  
We name this "the level and  
smooth."  
These three cannot be examined  
to the limit.  
Thus they merge together as one.  
"One"--there is nothing more  
encompassing above it,  
And nothing smaller below it.  
Boundless, formless! It cannot be  
named.  
And returns to the state of no-  
thing.  
This is called the formless form,  
The substanceless image.  
This is called the subtle and  
indistinct.  
Follow it and you won't see its  
back;  
Greet it and you won't see its  
head.  
Hold on to the Way of the  
present--  
To manage the things of the  
present.  
And to know the ancient  
beginning.  
This is called the beginning of  
the thread of the Way.

(Waley)

Because the eye gazes and can  
catch no glimpse of it.

It is called elusive.

Because the ear listens but  
cannot hear it.

It is called the rarefied.

Because the hand feels for it but  
cannot find it.

It is called the infinitesimal.

These three, because they cannot  
be further scrutinized,

Blend into one.

Its rising brings no light;

Its sinking, no darkness.

Endless the series of things  
without name

On the way back to where there  
is nothing.

They are called shapeless shapes;  
Forms without form;

Are called vague semblances.

Go towards them, and you can  
see no front;

Go after them, and you can see  
no rear.

Yet by seizing on the Way that  
was

You can ride the things that are  
now.

For to know what once there  
was, in the Beginning,

This is called the essence of the  
Way.

(Lin)

Looked at, but cannot be seen--

That is called the Invisible (*yi*).

Listened to, but cannot be  
heard--

That is called the Inaudible (*hsi*).

Grasped at, but cannot be  
touched--

That is called the Intangible  
(*wei*).

These three elude all our  
inquiries

And hence blend and become  
One.

Not by its rising, is there light.

Nor by its sinking, is there  
darkness.

Unceasing, continuous.

It cannot be defined,

And reverts back to the realm of  
nothingness.

That is why it is called the Form  
of the Formless.

The Image of the Nothingness.

That is why it is called the  
Elusive:

Meet it and you do not see its  
face;

Follow it and you do not see its  
back.

He who holds fast to the Tao of  
old

In order to manage the affairs of  
Now

Is able to know the Primeval

Beginnings

Which are the continuity of Tao.

(Cleary)

What you don't see when you  
look

is called the unobtrusive.

What you don't hear when you  
listen

is called the rarefied.

What you don't get when you  
grasp

is called the subtle.

These three cannot be completely  
fathomed,

so they merge into one;  
above is not bright, below is not  
dark.

Continuous, unnameable, it  
returns again to nothing.

This is called the stateless state,  
the image of no thing;

this is called mental abstraction.

When you face it you do not see  
its head,

when you follow it you do not  
see its back.

Hold the ancient Way  
so as to direct present existence:

only when you can know the  
ancient

can this be called the basic cycle  
of the Way.

(Feng&English)

Look, it cannot be seen--it is  
beyond form.

Listen, it cannot be heard--it is  
beyond sound.

Grasp, it cannot be held--it is  
intangible.

These three are indefinable;

Therefore they are joined as one.

From above it is not bright;

From below it is not dark:

An unbroken thread beyond  
description.

It returns to nothingness.

The form of the formless.

The image of the imageless.

It is called indefinable and  
beyond imagination.

Stand before it and there is no  
beginning.

Follow it and there is no end.

Stay with the ancient Tao.

Move with the present.

Knowing the ancient beginning is  
the essence of Tao.

(Wu)--FIFTEEN

The ancient adepts of the Tao  
were subtle and flexible, profound  
and comprehensive.

Theirs minds were too deep to be  
fathomed.

Because they are unfathomable.

One can only describe them  
vaguely by their appearance.

Hesitant like one wading a  
stream in winter;

Timid like one afraid of his  
neighbours on all sides;

Cautious and courteous like a  
guest;

Yielding like ice on the point of  
melting;

Simple like an uncarved block;

Hollow like a cave;

Confused like a muddy pool;

And yet who else could quietly  
and gradually evolve from the  
muddy to the clear?

Who else could slowly but  
steadily move from the inert to the  
living?

He who keeps the Tao does not  
want to be full.

But precisely because he is never  
full.

He can always remain like a  
hidden sprout.

And does not rush to early  
ripening.

(Lau)

Of old he who was well versed in  
the way

Was minutely subtle,  
mysteriously comprehending.

And too profound to be known.

It is because he could not be  
known

That he can only be given a  
makeshift description:

Tentative, as if fording a river in  
winter.

Hesitant, as if in fear of his  
neighbours;

Formal like a guest;

Falling apart like thawing ice;

Thick like the uncarved block;

Vacant like a valley;

Murky like muddy water.

Who can be muddy and yet,  
settling, slowly become limpid?

Who can be at rest and yet  
stirring, slowly come to life?

He who holds fast to this way

Desires not to be full.

It is because he is not full

That he can be worn and yet  
newly made.

(Chan)

Of old those who were the best  
rulers were subtly mysterious and  
profoundly penetrating;

Too deep to comprehend.

And because they cannot be  
comprehended.

I can only describe them  
arbitrarily:

Cautious, like crossing a frozen  
stream in the winter,

Being at a loss, like one fearing  
danger on all sides.

Reserved, like one visiting,

Supple and pliant, like ice about  
to melt.

Genuine, like a piece of uncarved  
wood,

Open and broad, like a valley,

Merged and undifferentiated, like  
muddy water.

Who can make muddy water  
gradually clear through  
tranquillity?

Who can make the still gradually  
come to life through activity?

He who embraces this Tao does  
not want to fill himself to

overflowing.

It is precisely because there is no  
overflowing that he is beyond  
wearing out and renewal.

(Henricks)

The one who was skilled at  
practicing the Way in antiquity,

Was subtle and profound,

mysterious and penetratingly wise.

His depth cannot be known.

It is only because he cannot be  
known

That therefore were I forced to  
describe him I'd say:

Hesitant we he! Like someone  
crossing a river in winter.

Undecided he was! As though in  
fear of his neighbors on all for  
sides.

Solemn and polite was he! Like a  
guest.

Scattered and dispersed was he!  
Like ice as it melts.

Genuine, unformed was he! Like  
uncarved wood.

Merged, undifferentiated was he!  
Like muddy water.

Broad and expansive was he! like  
a valley.

If you take muddy water and still  
it, it gradually becomes clear.

If you bring something to rest in  
order to move it, it gradually  
comes alive.

The one who preserves this Way  
does not desire to be full;

Therefore he can wear out with  
no need to be renewed.

(Waley)

Of old those that were the best  
officers of Court  
Had inner natures subtle,  
abstruse, mysterious, penetrating.  
Too deep to be understood.  
And because such men could not  
be understood  
I can but tell of them as they  
appeared to the world:  
Circumspect they seemed, like  
one who in winter crosses a  
stream.  
Watchful, as one who must meet  
danger on every side.  
Ceremonious, as one who pays a  
visit;  
Yet yielding, as ice when it  
begins to melt.  
Blank, as a piece of uncarved  
wood;  
Yet receptive as a hollow in the  
hills.  
Murky as a troubled stream--  
Which of you can assume such  
murkiness, to become in the end  
still and clear?  
Which of you can make yourself  
inert, to become in the end full of  
life and stir?  
Those who possess this Tao do  
not try to fill themselves to the  
brim,  
And because they do not try to  
fill themselves to the brim  
They are like a garment that  
endures all wear and need never be  
renewed (?).

(Lin)

The wise ones of old had subtle  
wisdom and depth of  
understanding.  
So profound that they could not  
be understood.  
And because they could not be  
understood,  
Perforce must they be so  
described:  
Cautious, like crossing a wintry  
stream.  
Irresolute, like one fearing  
danger all around,  
Grave, like one acting as a guest,  
Self-effacing, like ice beginning  
to melt.  
Genuine, like a piece of  
undressed wood,  
Open minded, like a valley,  
And mixing freely, like murky  
water.  
Who can find repose in a muddy  
world?  
By lying still, it becomes clear.  
Who can maintain his calm for  
long?  
By activity, it comes back to life.  
He who embraces this Tao  
Guards against being over-full.  
Because he guards against being  
over-full,  
He is beyond wearing out and  
renewal.

(Cleary)

Skilled warriors of old were  
subtle.  
mysteriously powerful,  
so deep they were unknowable.  
Just because they are  
unknowable.  
I will try to describe them.  
Their wariness was as that of one  
crossing a river in winter.  
their caution was as that of one  
in fear of all around;  
their gravity was as that of a  
guest.  
their relaxation was as that of ice  
at the melting point.  
Simple as uncarved wood,  
open as the valleys,  
they were inscrutable as murky  
water.  
Who can, in turbidity,  
use the gradual clarification of  
stillness?  
Who can, long at rest,  
use the gradual enlivening of  
movement?  
Those who preserve this Way do  
not want fullness.  
Just because of not wanting  
fullness,  
it is possible to use to the full  
and not make anew.

(Feng&English)

The ancient masters were subtle,  
mysterious, profound, responsive.  
The depth of their knowledge is  
unfathomable.  
Because it is unfathomable,  
All we can do is describe their  
appearance.  
Watchful, like men crossing a  
winter stream.  
Alert, like men aware of danger.  
Courteous, like visiting guests.  
Yielding, like ice about to melt.  
Simple, like uncarved blocks of  
wood.  
Hollow, like caves.  
Opaque, like muddy pools.  
Who can wait quietly while the  
mud settles?  
Who can remain still until the  
moment of action?  
Observers of the Tao do not seek  
fulfillment.  
Not seeking fulfillment, they are  
not swayed by desire for change.



(Wu)--SIXTEEN

Attain to utmost emptiness.  
Cling single-heartedly to interior  
peace.

While all things are stirring  
together.

I only contemplate the Return.  
For flourishing as they do.  
Each of them will return to its  
root.

To return to the root is to find  
peace.

To find peace is to fulfill one's  
destiny.

To fulfill one's destiny is to be  
constant.

To know the Constant is called  
Insight.

If one does not know the  
Constant.

One runs blindly into disasters.  
If one knows the Constant,

One can understand and embrace  
all.

If one understands and embraces  
all.

One is capable of doing justice.  
To be just is to be kingly;

To be kingly is to be heavenly;  
To be heavenly is to be one with

the Tao;

To be one with the Tao is to  
abide forever.

Such a one will be safe and  
whole

Even after the dissolution of his  
body.

(Lau)

I do my utmost to attain  
emptiness;

I hold firmly to stillness.  
The myriad creatures all rise

together

and I watch their return.

The teaming creatures

All return to their separate roots.

Returning to one's roots is known  
as stillness.

That is what is meant by  
returning to one's destiny.

Returning to one's destiny is  
known as the constant.

Knowledge of the constant is  
known as discernment.

Woe to him who willfully  
innovates

While ignorant of the constant,

But should one act from  
knowledge of the constant

One's action will lead to  
impartiality,

Impartiality to kingliness,

Kingliness to heaven,

Heaven to the way,

The way to perpetuity,

And to the end of one's days one  
will meet with no danger.

(Chan)

Attain complete vacuity,

Maintain steadfast quietude.

All things come into being,

And I see thereby their return.

All things flourish,

But each one returns to its root.

This return to its root means  
tranquillity.

It is called returning to its  
destiny.

To return to destiny is called the  
eternal (Tao).

To know the eternal is called  
enlightenment.

Not to know the eternal is to act  
blindly to result in disaster.

He who knows the eternal is all-  
embracing.

Being all-embracing, he is  
impartial.

Being impartial, he is kingly  
(universal).

Being kingly, he is one with  
Nature.

Being one with Nature, he is in  
accord with Tao.

Being in accord with Tao, he is  
everlasting,

And is free from danger  
throughout his lifetime.

(Henricks)

Take emptiness to the limit;

Maintain tranquillity in the  
center.

The ten thousand things--side-by-  
side they arise;

And by this I see their return.

Things come forth in great  
numbers;

Each one returns to its root.

This is called tranquillity.

"Tranquillity" --This means to  
return to your fate.

To return to your fate is to be  
constant;

To know the constant is to be  
wise.

Now to know the constant is to  
be wise.

Not to know the constant is to be  
reckless and wild;

If you're reckless and wild, your  
actions will lead to misfortune.

To know the constant is to be  
called all embracing;

To be all-embracing is to be  
impartial;

To be impartial is to be kingly;

To be kingly is to be like  
Heaven;

To be like Heaven is to be one  
with the Tao;

If you're one with the Tao, to the  
end of your days you'll suffer no  
harm.

(Waley)

Push far enough towards the  
Void.  
Hold fast enough to Quietness.  
And of the ten thousand things  
none but can be worked on by you.  
I have beheld them, whither they  
go back.  
See, all things howsoever they  
flourish  
Return to the root from which  
they grew.  
This return to the root is called  
Quietness;  
Quietness is called submission to  
Fate;  
What has submitted to Fate has  
become part of the always-so.  
To know the always-so is to be  
Illumined;  
Not to know it, means to go  
blindly to disaster.  
He who knows the always-so has  
room in him for everything;  
He who has room in him for  
everything is without prejudice.  
To be without prejudice is to be  
kingly;  
To be kingly is to be of heaven;  
To be of heaven is to be in Tao.  
Tao is forever and he that  
possesses it,  
Though his body ceases, is not  
destroyed.

(Lin)

Attain the utmost humility;  
Hold firm to the basis of  
Quietude.  
The myriad things take shape  
and rise to activity.  
But I watch them fall back to  
their repose.  
Like vegetation that luxuriantly  
grows  
But returns to the root (soil) from  
which it springs.  
To return to the root is Repose;  
It is called going back to one's  
Destiny.  
Going back to one's Destiny is to  
find the Eternal Law.  
To know the Eternal Law is  
Enlightenment.  
And not to know the Eternal Law  
Is to court disaster  
He who knows the Eternal Law  
is tolerant;  
Being tolerant, he is impartial;  
Being impartial, he is kingly;  
Being kingly, he is in accord with  
Nature;  
Being in accord with Nature, he  
is in accord with Tao;  
Being in accord with Tao he is  
eternal.  
And his whole life is preserved  
from harm.

(Cleary)

Attain the climax of emptiness,  
preserve the utmost quiet:  
as myriad things act in concert,  
I thereby observe the return.  
Things flourish,  
then each return to its root.  
Returning to the root is called  
stillness:  
stillness is called return to Life,  
return to Life is called the  
constant.  
knowing the constant is called  
enlightenment.  
Acts at random, in ignorance of  
the constant, bode ill.  
Knowing the constant gives  
perspective;  
this perspective is impartial.  
Impartiality is the highest  
nobility;  
the highest nobility is divine,  
and the divine is the Way.  
This Way is everlasting,  
not endangered by physical  
death.

(Feng&English)

Empty yourself of everything.  
Let the mind become still.  
The ten thousand things rise and  
fall while the Self watches their  
return.  
They grow and flourish and then  
return to the source.  
Returning to the source is  
stillness, which is the way of  
nature.  
The way of nature is unchanging.  
Knowing constancy is insight.  
Not knowing constancy leads to  
disaster.  
Knowing constancy, the mind is  
open.  
With an open mind, you will be  
openhearted.  
Being openhearted, you will act  
royally.  
Being royal, you will attain the  
divine.  
Being divine, you will be at one  
with the Tao.  
Being at one with the Tao is  
eternal.  
And though the body dies, the  
Tao will never pass away.

(Wu)--SEVENTEEN

The Highest type of ruler is one of whose existence the people are barely aware.

Next comes one whom they love and praise.

Next comes one whom they fear.

Next comes one whom they despise and defy.

When you are lacking in faith.

Others will be unfaithful to you.

The Sage is self-effacing and scanty of words.

When his task is accomplished and things have been completed.

All the people say, "We ourselves have achieved it!"

(Lau)

The best of all rulers is but a shadowy presence to his subjects.

Next comes the ruler they love and praise;

Next comes one they fear;

Next comes one with whom they take liberties.

When there is not enough faith, there is lack of good faith.

Hesitant, he does not utter words lightly.

When his task is accomplished and his work is done

The people all say, 'It happened to us naturally.'

(Chan)

The best (rulers) are those whose existence is (merely) known by the people.

The next best are those who are loved and praised.

The next best are those who are feared.

And the next are those who are despised.

It is only when one does not have enough faith in others that others will have no faith in him.

[The great rulers] value their words highly.

They accomplish their task; they complete their work.

Nevertheless their people say that they simply follow Nature (*Tzu-jan*).

(Henricks)

With the highest kind of rulers, those below simply know they exist.

With those one step down--they love and praise them.

With those one further step down--they fear them.

And with those at the bottom--they ridicule and insult them.

When trust is insufficient, there will be no trust in return.

Hesitant, undecided! Like this is his respect for speaking.

He completes his tasks and finishes his affairs.

Yet the common people say, "These things all happened by nature."

(Waley)

Of the highest the people merely  
know that such a one exists;

The next they draw near to and  
praise.

The next they shrink from,  
intimidated; but revile.

Truly, 'it is by not believing  
people that you turn them into  
liars'.

But from the Sage it is so hard at  
any price to get a single word

That when his task is  
accomplished, his work done,

Throughout the country every  
one says 'It happened of its own  
accord'.

(Lin)

Of the best rulers the people  
(only) know that they exist;

The next best they love and  
praise:

The next they fear;  
and the next they revile.

When they do not command the  
people's faith.

Some will lose faith in them.

And then they resort to oaths!

But (of the best) when their task  
is accomplished, their work done,

The people all remark, "We have  
done it ourselves."

(Cleary)

Very great leaders in their  
domains are only known to exist.

Those next best are beloved and  
praised.

The lesser are feared and  
despised.

Therefore when faith is  
insufficient and there is disbelief,  
it is from the high value placed  
on words.

Works are accomplished, tasks  
are completed,

and ordinary folk all say they are  
acting spontaneously.

(Feng&English)

The very highest is barely  
known.

Then comes that which people  
know and love.

Then that which is feared.

Then that which is despised.

Who does not trust enough will  
not be trusted.

When actions are performed

Without unnecessary speech.

People say, "We did it!"

(Wu)--EIGHTEEN

When the Great Tao was abandoned.

There appeared humanity and justice.

When intelligence and wit arose.

There appeared great hypocrites.

When the six relations lost their harmony,

There appeared filial piety and paternal kindness.

When darkness and disorder began to reign in a kingdom.

There appeared the loyal ministers.

(Lau)

When the great way falls into disuse

There are benevolence and rectitude:

When cleverness emerges

There is great hypocrisy;

When the six relations are at variance

There are filial children;

When the state is benighted

There are loyal ministers.

(Chan)

When the great Tao declined.

The doctrines of humanity (*jen*) and righteousness (*i*) arose.

When knowledge and wisdom appeared.

There emerged great hypocrisy.

When the six family relations are not in harmony,

There will be the advocacy of filial piety and deep love of children.

When a country is in disorder,

There will be praise of loyal ministers.

(Henricks)

Therefore when the Great Way is rejected,

it is then that we have the virtues of humanity and righteousness;

When knowledge and wisdom appear,

it is then that there is great hypocrisy;

When the six relations are not in harmony,

it is then that we have filial piety and compassion;

And when the country is in chaos and confusion,

it is then that there are virtuous officials.

(Waley)

It was when the Great Way  
declined

That human kindness and  
morality arose;

It was when intelligence and  
knowledge appeared

That the Great Artifice began.

It was when the six near ones  
were no longer at peace

That there was talk of 'dutiful  
sons';

Nor till fatherland was dark with  
strife

Did we hear of 'loyal slaves'.

(Lin)

On the decline of the great Tao,  
The doctrines of "love" and

"justice" arose

When knowledge and cleverness  
appeared.

Great hypocrisy followed in its  
wake.

When the six relations no longer  
lived at peace.

There was (praise of) "kind  
parents" and "filial sons."

When a country fell into chaos  
and misrule.

There was (praise of) "loyal  
ministers."

(Cleary)

When the Great Way is deserted  
there is humanitarian duty.

When intelligence comes forth,  
there is great fabrication.

When relations are discordant,  
then there is family love.

When the national polity is  
benighted and confused,

then there are loyal ministers.

(Feng&English)

When the great Tao is forgotten.

Kindness and morality arise.

When wisdom and intelligence  
are born.

The great pretense begins.

When there is no peace within  
the family,

Filial piety and devotion arise.

When the country is confused  
and in chaos,

Loyal ministers appear.

(Wu)--NINETEEN

Drop wisdom, abandon cleverness.

And the people will benefit a hundredfold.

Drop humanity, abandon justice.

And the people will return to their natural affections.

Drop shrewdness, abandon sharpness.

And robbers and thieves will cease to be.

These three are the criss-cross of Tao.

And are not sufficient in themselves.

Therefore, they should be subordinated to a higher principle:

See the Simple and embrace the Primal.

Diminish the self and curb the desires!

(Lau)

Exterminate the sages, discard the wise.

And the people will benefit a hundredfold.

Exterminate benevolence, discard rectitude.

And the people will again be filial;

Exterminate ingenuity, discard profit.

And there will no more thieves and bandits.

These three, being false adornments, are not enough

And the people must have something to which they can attach themselves:

Exhibit the unadorned and embrace the uncarved block,

Have little thought of self and as few desires as possible.

(Chan)

Abandon sageliness and discard wisdom;

Then the people will benefit a hundredfold.

Abandon humanity and discard righteousness;

Then the people will return to filial piety and deep love.

Abandon skill and discard profit; Then there will be no thieves or robbers.

However, these three things are ornament and not adequate.

Therefore let people hold on to these:

Manifest plainness,  
Embrace simplicity,  
Reduce selfishness,  
Have few desires.

(Henricks)

Eliminate sageliness, throw away knowledge.

And the people will benefit a hundredfold.

Eliminate humanity, throw away righteousness.

And the people will return to filial piety and compassion.

Eliminate craftiness, throw away profit.

Then we will have no robbers and thieves.

These three sayings--

Regarded as a text are not yet complete.

Thus, we must see to it that they have the following appended:

Manifest plainness and embrace the genuine;

Lessen self-interest and make few your desires;

Eliminate learning and have no undue concern.

(Waley)

Banish wisdom. discard knowledge.

And the people will be benefited a hundredfold.

Banish human kindness. discard morality.

And the people will be dutiful and compassionate.

Banish skill. discard profit.

And thieves and robbers will disappear.

If when these three things are done they find life too plain and unadorned.

Then let them have accessories;  
Give them Simplicity to look at,  
the Uncarved Block to hold,

Give them selflessness and  
fewness of desires.

(Lin)

Banish wisdom. discard knowledge.

And the people shall profit a hundredfold:

Banish "love". discard "justice".  
And the people shall recover love of their kin:

Banish cunning, discard "utility".  
And thieves and brigands shall disappear.

As these three touch the externals  
and are inadequate;

The people have need of what  
they can depend upon:

Reveal thy Simple Self,  
Embrace thy Original Nature,  
Check thy selfishness,  
Curtail thy desires.

(Cleary)

Eliminate sagacity, abandon knowledge.

and the people benefit a hundredfold.

Eliminate humanitarianism,  
abandon duty,  
and the people return to familial love.

Eliminate craft, abandon profit,  
and theft will no longer exist.

These three become insufficient  
when used for embellishment  
causing there to be attachments.

See the basic,  
embrace the unspoiled,  
lessen selfishness,  
diminish desire.

(Feng&English)

Give up sainthood. renounce wisdom.

And it will be a hundred times better for everyone.

Give up kindness. renounce morality.  
And men will rediscover filial piety and love.

Give up ingenuity. renounce profit.

And bandits and thieves will disappear.

These three are outward forms alone; they are not sufficient in themselves.

It is more important  
To see the simplicity,  
To realize one's true nature,  
To cast off selfishness  
And temper desire.



(Wu)--TWENTY

Have done with learning,  
And you will have no more  
vexation.  
How great is the difference  
between "eh" and "o"?  
What is the distinction between  
"good" and "evil"?  
Must I fear what others fear?  
What abysmal nonsense this is!  
All men are joyous and beaming,  
As though feasting upon a  
sacrificial ox,  
As though mounting the Spring  
Terrace;  
I alone am placid and give no  
sign.  
Like a babe which has not yet  
smiled.  
I am forlorn as one who has no  
home to return to.  
All men have enough and to  
spare:  
I alone appear to possess nothing.  
What a fool I am!  
What a muddled mind I have!  
All men are bright, bright:  
I alone am dim, dim.  
All men are sharp, sharp:  
I alone am mum, mum!  
Bland like the ocean,  
Aimless like the wafting gale.  
All men settle down in their  
grooves:  
I alone am stubborn and remain  
outside.  
But wherein I am most different  
from others is  
In knowing to take sustenance  
from my Mother!

(Lau)

Exterminate learning and there  
will no longer be worries.  
Between yea and nay  
How much difference is there?  
Between good and evil  
How great the distance?  
What others fear  
One must also fear.  
And wax without having reached  
the limit.  
The multitude are joyous  
As if partaking of the *t'ai lao*  
offering  
Or going up to a terrace in  
spring.  
I alone am inactive and reveal no  
signs.  
Like a baby that has not yet  
learned to smile,  
Listless as though with no home  
to go back to.  
The multitude all have more than  
enough.  
I alone seem to be in want,  
My mind is that of a fool--how  
blank!  
Vulgar people are alert.  
I alone am muddled.  
Calm like the sea;  
Like a high wind that never  
ceases.  
The multitude all have a purpose.  
I alone am different from others  
And value being fed by the  
mother.

(Chan)

Abandon learning and there will be  
no sorrow.  
How much difference is there  
between "Yes, sir." and "Of course  
not"?  
How much difference is there  
between "good" and "evil"?  
What people dread, do not fail to  
dread.  
But, alas, how confused, and the  
end is not yet.  
The multitude are merry, as though  
feasting on a day of sacrifice,  
Or like ascending a tower at  
springtime.  
I alone am inert, showing no sign  
(of desires),  
Like an infant that has not yet  
smiled.  
Wearied, indeed, I seem to be  
without a home.  
The multitude all possess more  
than enough,  
I alone seem to have lost all.  
Mine is indeed the mind of an  
ignorant man,  
Indiscriminate and dull!  
Common folks are indeed brilliant;  
I alone see in the dark.  
Common folks see difference and  
are clear-cut;  
I alone make no distinctions,  
I seem drifting as the sea;  
Like the wind blowing about,  
seemingly without destination.  
The multitude all have purpose;  
I alone seem to be stubborn and  
rustic  
I alone differ from others,  
And value drawing sustenance  
from Mother (Tao).

(Henricks)

Agreement and angry rejection;  
How great is the difference  
between them?  
Beautiful and ugly;  
What's it like--the difference  
between them?  
The one who is feared by others.  
Must also because of this fear  
other men.  
Wild, unrestrained! It will never  
come to an end!  
The multitudes are peaceful and  
happy;  
Like climbing a terrace in  
springtime to feast at the *t'ai-lao*  
sacrifice.  
But I'm tranquil and quiet--not  
yet having given any sign.  
Like a child who has not yet  
smiled,  
Tired and exhausted--as though I  
have no place to return.  
The multitudes all have surplus.  
I alone seem to be lacking.  
Mine is the mind of a fool --  
ignorant and stupid!  
The common people discriminate  
and make fine distinctions;  
I alone am muddled and con-  
fused.  
Formless am I! Like the ocean;  
Shapeless am I! As though I have  
nothing in which I can rest.  
The masses all have their reasons  
for acting;  
I alone am stupid and obstinate like  
a rustic.  
But my desires *alone* differ from  
those of others--For I value drawing  
sustenance from the Mother.

(Waley)

Banish learning, and there will be  
no more grieving.

Between *wei* and *o*

What after all is the difference?

Can it be compared to the  
difference between good and bad?

The saying 'what others avoid I  
too must avoid'

How false and superficial it is!

All men, indeed, are wreathed in  
smiles.

As though feasting after the Great  
Sacrifice,

As though going up to the Spring  
Carnival.

I alone am inert, like a child that  
has not yet given sign:

Like an infant that has not yet  
smiled.

I droop and drift, as though I  
belonged nowhere.

All men have enough and to spare;  
I alone seem to have lost

everything.

Mine is indeed the mind of a very  
idiot,

So dull am I.

The world is full of people that  
shine;

I alone am dark.

They look lively and self-assured;

I alone, depressed.

I seem unsettled as the ocean;

Blown adrift, never brought to a  
stop.

All men can be put to some use;

I alone and intractable and boorish.

But wherein I most am different  
from men

Is that I prize no sustenance that  
comes not from the Mother's breast.

(Lin)

Banish Learning, and vexations  
end.

Between "Ah!" and "Ough!"

How much difference is there?

Between "good" and "evil"

How much difference is there?

That which men fear

Is indeed to be feared;

But, alas, distant yet is the dawn  
(of awakening)!

The people of the world are  
merry-making,

As if eating of the sacrificial  
offerings.

As if mounting the terrace in  
Spring;

I alone am mild, like one  
unemployed,

Like a new-born babe that cannot  
smile,

Unattached, like one without a  
home.

The people of the world have  
enough and to spare,

But I am like one left out,

My heart must be that of a fool,

Being muddled, nebulous!

The vulgar are knowing, luminous;

I alone am dull, confused.

The vulgar are clever, self-assured;

I alone, depressed.

Patient as the sea,

Adrift, seemingly aimless

The people of the world all have  
purpose;

I alone appear stubborn and  
uncouth.

I alone differ from the other people,  
And value drawing sustenance  
from the Mother.

(Cleary)

Detach from learning and you  
have no worries.

How far apart are yes and yeah?

How far apart are good and bad?

The things people fear cannot but  
be feared.

Wild indeed the uncentered!

Most people celebrate

as if they were barbecuing a  
slaughtered cow.

or taking in the springtime vistas:

I alone am aloof,

showing no sign.

like an infant that doesn't yet  
smile,

riding buoyantly

as if with nowhere to go.

Most people have too much;

I alone seem to be missing  
something.

Mine is indeed the mind of an  
ignoramus

in its unadulterated simplicity.

Ordinary people try to shine;

I alone seem to be dark.

Ordinary people try to be on the  
alert;

I alone am unobtrusive,

calm as the ocean depths,

buoyant as if anchored nowhere.

Most people have ways and  
means;

I alone am unsophisticated and  
simple.

I alone am different from people  
in that I value seeking food from

the mother.

(Feng&English)

Give up learning, and put an end  
to your troubles.

Is there a difference between yes  
and no?

Is there a difference between  
good and evil?

Must I fear what others fear?

What nonsense!

Other people are contented,  
enjoying the sacrificial feast of the  
ox.

In spring some go to the park,  
and climb the terrace.

But I alone am drifting, not  
knowing where I am.

Like a newborn babe before it  
learns to smile.

I am alone, without a place to go.  
Others have more than they need.

But I alone have nothing.

I am a fool. Oh, yes! I am  
confused.

Others are clear and bright.

But I alone am dim and weak.

Others are sharp and clever,

But I alone am dull and stupid.

Oh, I drift like waves of the sea.

Without direction, like restless  
wind.

Everyone else is busy.

But I alone am aimless and  
depressed.

I am different.

I am nourished by the great  
mother.

(Wu)--TWENTY-ONE

It lies in the nature of Grand  
Virtue

To follow the Tao and the Tao  
alone.

Now what is the Tao?

It is Something elusive and  
evasive.

Evasive and elusive!

And yet It contains within Itself a  
Form.

Elusive and evasive!

And yet it contains within Itself a  
Substance.

Shadowy and dim!

And yet it contains within Itself a  
Core of Vitality.

The Core of Vitality is very real.

It contains within Itself and  
unfailing Sincerity.

Throughout the ages Its Name  
has been preserved

In order to recall the Beginning  
of all things.

How do I know the ways of all  
things at the Beginning?

By what is within me.

(Lau)

In his every movement a man of  
great virtue

Follows the way and the way  
only.

As a thing that was is

Shadowy, indistinct.

Indistinct and shadowy.

Yet within it is an image;

Shadowy and indistinct.

Yet within it is a substance.

Dim and dark.

Yet within it is an essence.

This essence is quite genuine

And within it is something that  
can be tested.

From the present back to  
antiquity

Its name never deserted it.

It serves as a means for  
inspecting the fathers of the  
multitude.

How do I know that the fathers  
of the multitude are like that?

By means of this.

(Chan)

The all-embracing quality of the  
great virtue follows alone from the  
Tao.

The thing that is called Tao is  
eluding and vague.

Vague and eluding, there is in it  
the form.

Eluding and vague, in it are  
things.

Deep and obscure, in it is the  
essence.

The essence is very real; in it are  
evidences.

From the time of old until now,  
its name (manifestations) ever  
remains.

By which we may see the  
beginning of all things.

How do I know that the  
beginning of all things are so?

Through this (Tao).

(Henricks)

The character of great virtue  
follows along from the Way.

As for the nature of the Way--it's  
shapeless and formless.

Formless! Shapeless! Inside there  
are images.

Shapeless! Formless! Inside there  
are things.

Hidden! Obscure! Inside there  
are essences.

These essences are very real;  
Inside them is the proof.

From present back to the past,  
Its name has never gone away.

It is by this that we comply with  
the father of the multitude of  
things.

How do we know that the father  
of the multitude is so?

By this.

(Waley)

Such the scope of the All-  
pervading Power  
That it alone can act through the  
Way.  
For the Way is a thing  
impalpable, incommensurable.  
Incommensurable, impalpable.  
Yet latent in it are forms;  
Impalpable, incommensurable  
Yet within it are entities.  
Shadowy it is and dim;  
Yet within it there is a force.  
A force that though rarefied  
Is none the less efficacious.  
From the time of old till now  
Its charge has not departed  
But cheers onward the many  
warriors.  
How do I know that the many  
warriors are so?  
Through this.

(Lin)

The marks of great Virtue  
Follow alone from the Tao.  
The thing that is called Tao  
Is elusive, evasive.  
Evasive, elusive.  
Yet latent in it are forms.  
Elusive, evasive.  
Yet latent in it are objects.  
Dark and dim.  
Yet latent in it is the life-force.  
The life-force being very true.  
Latent in it are evidences.  
From the days of old till now  
Its Named (manifested forms)  
have never ceased.  
By which we may view the  
Father of All things.  
How do I know the shape of the  
Father of All things?  
Through these!

(Cleary)

For the countenance of great  
virtue.  
only the Way is to be followed.  
As a thing, the Way is abstract  
and elusive:  
elusive and abstract, there are  
images in it;  
abstract and elusive, there is  
something there.  
Recondite, hidden, it has vitality  
therein:  
that vitality is very real;  
it has truth therein.  
From ancient times to now,  
its name is the undeparting;  
thereby are seen all beauties.  
How do I know all beauties are  
thus?  
By this.

(Feng&English)

The greatest Virtue is to follow  
Tao and Tao alone.  
The Tao is elusive and  
intangible.  
Oh, it is intangible and elusive,  
and yet within is image.  
Oh, it is elusive and intangible,  
and yet within is form.  
Oh, it is dim and dark, and yet  
within is essence.  
This essence is very real, and  
therein lies faith.  
From the very beginning until  
now its name has never been  
forgotten.  
Thus I perceive the creation.  
How do I know the ways of  
creation?  
Because of this.

(Wu)--TWENTY-TWO

Bend and you will be whole.  
Curl and you will be straight.  
Keep empty and you will be filled.  
Grow old and you will be renewed.  
Have a little and you will gain.  
Have much and you will be confused.  
Therefore, the Sage embraces the One.  
And becomes a Pattern to all under Heaven.  
He does not make a show of himself.  
Hence he shines;  
Does not justify himself,  
Hence he becomes known;  
Does not boast of his ability,  
Hence he gets his credit;  
Does not brandish his success,  
Hence he endures;  
Does not compete with anyone,  
Hence no one can compete with him.  
Indeed, the ancient saying: "Bend and you will remain whole" is no idle word.  
Nay, if you have really attained wholeness, everything will flock to you.

(Lau)

Bowed down then preserved;  
Bent then straight;  
Hollow then full;  
Worn then new;  
A little then benefited;  
A lot then perplexed.  
Therefore the sage embraces the One and is a model for the empire.  
He does not show himself, and so is conspicuous;  
He does not consider himself right, and so is illustrious;  
He does not brag, and so has merit;  
He does not boast, and so endures.  
It is because he does not contend that no one in the empire is in a position to contend with him.  
The way the ancients had it, 'Bowed down then preserved', is no empty saying. Truly it enables one to be preserved to the end.

(Chan)

To yield is to be preserved whole.  
To be bent is to become straight.  
To be empty is to be full.  
To be worn out is to be renewed.  
To have little is to possess.  
To have plenty is to be perplexed.  
Therefore the sage embraces the One  
And becomes a model of the world.  
He does not show himself; therefore he is luminous.  
He does not justify himself; therefore he becomes prominent.  
He does not boast of himself; therefore he is given credit.  
He does not brag; therefore he can endure long.  
It is precisely because he does not compete that the world cannot compete with him.  
Is the ancient saying, "To yield is to be preserved whole," empty words?  
Truly he will be preserved and (prominence, etc.) will come to him.

(Henricks)

Bent over, you will be preserved whole;  
When twisted, you'll be upright;  
When hollowed out, you'll be full;  
When worn out, you'll be renewed;  
When you have little, you'll attain much;  
With much, you'll be confused.  
Therefore the Sage holds on to the One and in this way becomes the shepherd of the world.  
He does not show himself off; therefore he becomes prominent.  
He does not put himself on display; therefore he brightly shines.  
He does not brag about himself; therefore he receives credit.  
He does not praise his own deeds; therefore he can long endure  
It is only because he does not compete that, therefore, no one is able to compete with him.  
The so-called "Bent over you'll be preserved whole" of the ancients  
Was an expression that was really close to it!  
Truly "wholeness" will belong to him.

(Waley)

"To remain whole, be twisted!"  
To become straight, let yourself  
be bent.  
To become full, be hollow.  
Be tattered, that you may be  
renewed.  
Those that have little, may get  
more.  
Those that have much, are  
perplexed.  
Therefore the Sage  
Clasps the Primal Unity,  
Testing by it everything under  
heaven.  
He does not show himself;  
therefore he is seen everywhere.  
He does not define himself,  
therefore he is distinct.  
He does not boast of what he will  
do, therefore he succeeds.  
He is not proud of his work, and  
therefore it endures.  
He does not contend,  
And for that very reason no one  
under heaven can contend with  
him.  
So then we see that the ancient  
saying "To remain whole, be  
twisted!" was no idle word; for true  
wholeness can only be achieved by  
return.

(Lin)

To yield is to be preserved  
whole.  
To be bent is to become straight.  
To be hollow is to be filled.  
To be tattered is to be renewed.  
To be in want is to possess.  
To have plenty is to be confused.  
Therefore the Sage embraces the  
One.  
And becomes the model of the  
world.  
He does not reveal himself,  
And is therefore luminous.  
He does not justify himself,  
And is therefore far-famed.  
He does not boast of himself,  
And therefore people give him  
credit.  
He does not pride himself,  
And is therefore the ruler among  
men.  
It is because he does not contend  
That no one in the world can  
contend against him.  
Is it not indeed true, as the  
ancients say,  
"To yield is to be preserved  
whole?"  
Thus he is preserved and the  
world does him homage.

(Cleary)

Be tactful and you remain whole;  
bend and you remain straight.  
The hollow is filled,  
the old is renewed.  
Economy is gain,  
excess is confusion.  
Therefore sages embrace unity  
as a model for the world.  
Not seeing themselves,  
they are therefore clear.  
Not asserting themselves,  
they are therefore outstanding.  
Not congratulating themselves,  
they are therefore meritorious.  
Not taking pride in themselves,  
they last long.  
It is just because they do not  
contend  
that no one in the world can  
contend with them.  
Is it empty talk, the old saying  
that tact keeps you whole?  
When truthfulness is complete, it  
still resorts to this.

(Feng&English)

Yield and overcome;  
Bend and be straight;  
Empty and be full;  
Wear out and be new;  
Have a little and gain;  
Have much and be confused.  
Therefore the wise embrace the  
one  
And set an example to all.  
Not putting on a display,  
They shine forth.  
Not justifying themselves,  
They are distinguished.  
Not boasting,  
They receive recognition.  
Not bragging,  
They never falter.  
They do not quarrel.  
So no one quarrels with them.  
Therefore the ancients say,  
"Yield and overcome."  
Is that an empty saying?  
Be really whole,  
And all things will come to you.

(Wu)--TWENTY-THREE

Only simple and quiet words will ripen of themselves.

For a whirlwind does not last a whole morning.

Not does a sudden shower last a whole day.

Who is the author? Heaven-and-Earth!

Even Heaven-and-Earth cannot make such violent things last long;

How much truer is it of the rash endeavors of men?

Hence, he who cultivates the Tao is one with the Tao;

He who practices Virtue is one with Virtue;

And he who courts after Loss is one with Loss.

To be one with Tao is to be a welcome accession to the Tao;

To be one with Virtue is to be a welcome accession to Virtue;

To be one with Loss is to be a welcome accession to Loss.

Deficiency of faith on your part Entails faithlessness on the part of others.

(Lau)

To use words but rarely Is to be natural.

Hence a gusty wind cannot last all morning, and a sudden downpour cannot last all day. Who is it that produces these? Heaven and earth. If even heaven and earth cannot go on for ever, much less can man. That is why one follows the way.

A man of the way conforms to the way; a man of virtue conforms to virtue; a man of loss conforms to loss. He who conforms to the way is gladly accepted by the way; he who conforms to virtue is gladly accepted by virtue; he who conforms to loss is gladly accepted by loss.

When there is not enough faith, there is lack of good faith.

(Chan)

Nature says few words.  
For this reason a whirlwind does not last a whole morning,  
Nor does a rainstorm last a whole day.

What causes them?  
It is Heaven and Earth (Nature).  
If even Heaven and Earth cannot make them last long,  
How much less can man?

Therefore he who follows Tao is identified with Tao.

He who follows virtue is identified with virtue.

He who abandons (Tao) is identified with the abandonment (of Tao).

He who is identified with Tao -- Tao is also happy to have him.

He who is identified with virtue -- virtue is also happy to have him.

And he who is identified with the abandonment (of Tao) -- the abandonment (of Tao) is also happy to abandon him.

It is only when one does not have enough faith in others that others will have no faith in him.

(Henricks)

To rarely speak--such is the way of Nature.

Fierce winds don't last the whole morning;

Torrential rains don't last the whole day.

Who makes these things?

If even Heaven and Earth can't make these last long--

How much the more is this true for man?!

Therefore, one who devotes himself to the Way is one with the Way;

One who devotes himself to Virtue is one with that Virtue;

And one who devotes himself to losing is one with that loss.

To the one who is one with

Virtue, the Way also gives Virtue;

While for the one who is one with his loss, the Way also disregards him.

(Waley)

To be always talking is against nature.

For the same reason a hurricane never lasts a whole morning, nor a rainstorm all day.

Who is it that makes the wind and the rain?

It is Heaven-and-Earth.

And if even Heaven-and-Earth cannot blow or pour for long, how much less in his utterance should man?

Truly, if one uses the Way as one's instrument, the results will be like the Way; if one uses the 'power' as one's instrument, the results will be like the power.

If one uses what is the reverse of the 'power' as one's instrument, the results will be the reverse of the 'power'.

For those who have conformed themselves to the Way, the Way readily lends its power.

To those who have conformed themselves to the power, the power readily lends more power.

While to those who conform themselves to inefficacy, inefficacy readily lends its ineffectiveness.

'It is by not believing in people that you turn them into liars.'

(Lin)

Nature says few words:

Hence it is that a squall lasts not a whole morning.

A rainstorm continues not a whole day.

Where do they come from?

From Nature.

Even Nature does not last long (in its utterances).

How much less should human beings?

Therefore it is that:

He who follows the Tao is identified with the Tao.

He who follows Virtue is identified with Virtue.

He who abandons (Tao) is identified with abandonment (of Tao):

He who is identified with Tao --

Tao is also glad to welcome him.

He who is identified with Virtue

-- Virtue is glad to welcome him.

He who is identified with abandonment --

Abandonment is also glad to welcome him.

He who has not enough faith

Will not be able to command faith from others.

(Cleary)

To speak rarely is natural.

That is why a gusty wind doesn't last the morning,

a downpour of rain doesn't last the day.

Who does this? Heaven and earth.

If even heaven and earth cannot go on forever,

how much less can human beings!

Therefore those who follow the Way assimilate to the Way; the virtuous assimilate to virtue. those who have lost assimilate to loss.

Those who assimilate to the Way are happy to gain it,

those who assimilate to virtue are happy to gain it,

and those who assimilate to loss are also happy to gain it.

When trust is insufficient, there is distrust.

(Feng&English)

To talk little is natural.

High winds do not last all morning.

Heavy rain does not last all day.

Why is this? Heaven and earth!

If heaven and earth cannot make things eternal.

How is it possible for man?

He who follows the Tao

Is at one with the Tao.

He who is virtuous

Experiences Virtue.

He who loses the way Is lost.

When you are at one with the Tao.

The Tao welcomes you.

When you are on with Virtue.

The Virtue is always there.

When you are at one with loss.

The loss is experience willingly.

He who does not trust enough

Will not be trusted.



(Wu)--TWENTY-FOUR

One on tip-toe cannot stand.

One astride cannot walk.

One who displays himself does not shine.

One who justifies himself has no glory.

One who boasts of his own ability has no merit.

One who parades his own success will not endure.

In Tao these things are called "unwanted food and extraneous growths."

Which are loathed by all things.

Hence a man of Tao does not set his heart upon them.

(Lau)

He who tiptoes cannot stand; he who strides cannot walk.

He who shows himself is not conspicuous;

He who considers himself right is not illustrious;

He who brags will have no merit;

He who boasts will not endure.

From the point of view of the way these are 'excessive food and useless exercises'. As there are Things that detest them, he who has the way does not abide in them.

(Chan)

He who stands on tiptoe is not steady.

He who strides forward does not go.

He who shows himself is not luminous.

He who justifies himself is not prominent.

He who boasts of himself is not given credit.

He who brags does not endure long.

From the point of view of Tao, these are like remnants of food and tumors of action.

Which all creatures detest.

Therefore those who possess Tao turn away from them.

(Henricks)

One who boasts is not established;

One who shows himself off does not become prominent;

One who puts himself on display does not brightly shine;

One who brags about himself gets no credit;

One who praises himself does not long endure.

In the Way, such things are called:

"Surplus food and redundant action."

And with things--there are those who hate them.

Therefore, the one with the Way in them does not dwell.

(Waley)

'He who stands on tiptoe, does not stand firm;

He who takes the longest strides, does not walk the faster.'

He who does his own looking sees little.

He who defines himself is not therefore distinct.

He who boasts of what he will do succeeds in nothing;

He who is proud of his work, achieves nothing that endures.

Of these, from the standpoint of the Way, it is said:

'Pass round superfluous dishes to those that have already had enough.

And no creature but will reject them in disgust.'

That is why he that possesses Tao does not linger.

(Lin)

He who stands on tiptoe does not stand (firm);

He who strains his strides does not walk (well);

He who reveals himself is not luminous;

He who justifies himself is not far-famed;

He who boasts of himself is not given credit;

He who prides himself is not chief among men.

These in the eyes of Tao

Are called "the dregs and tumors of Virtue."

Which are things of disgust.

Therefore the man of Tao spurns them.

(Cleary)

Those on tiptoe don't stand up.  
those who take long strides don't walk;

those who see themselves are not perceptive.

those who assert themselves are not illustrious;

those who glorify themselves have no merit,

those who are proud of themselves do not last.

On the Way, these are called overconsumption and excess activity.

Some people disdain them,  
so those with the Way abstain.

(Feng&English)

He who stands on tiptoes is not steady.

He who strides cannot maintain the pace.

He who makes a show is not enlightened.

He who is self-righteous is not respected.

He who boasts achieves nothing.

He who brags will not endure.

According to the Tao, "These are extra food and unnecessary luggage."

They do not bring happiness.

Therefore the followers of the Tao avoid them.

(Wu)--TWENTY-FIVE

There was Something undefined  
and yet complete in itself.

Born before Heaven and Earth.  
Silent and Boundless.

Standing alone without change.  
Yet pervading all without fail.

It may be regarded as the Mother  
of all the world.

I do not know its name:

I style it "Tao";

And, in the absence of a better  
word, call it "The Great."

To be great is to go on.

To go on is to be far.

To be far is to return.

Hence, "Tao is great.

Heaven is great.

Earth is great.

King is great."

Thus, the king is one of the great  
four in the Universe.

Man follows the ways of the  
Earth.

The Earth follows the ways of  
Heaven,

Heaven follows the ways of Tao,  
Tao follows its own ways.

(Lau)

There is a thing confusedly  
formed.

Born before heaven and earth.  
Silent and void

It stands alone and does not  
change.

Goes round and does not weary.

It is capable of being the mother  
of the world.

I know not its name

So I style it 'the way'.

I give it the makeshift name of  
'the great'.

Being great, it is further  
described as receding,

Receding, it is described as far  
away.

Being far away, it is described as  
turning back.

Hence the way is great; heaven is  
great; earth is great; and king is  
also great. Within the realm there  
are four things that are great, and  
the king counts as one.

Man models himself on earth,

Earth on heaven,

Heaven on the way,

And the way on that which is  
naturally so.

(Chan)

There was something  
undifferentiated and yet complete.

Which existed before heaven and  
earth.

Soundless and formless, it  
depends on nothing and does not  
change.

It operates everywhere and is  
free from danger.

It may be considered the mother  
of the universe.

I do not know its name; I call it  
Tao.

If forced to give its name, I shall  
call it Great.

Now being great means  
functioning everywhere.

Functioning everywhere means  
far-reaching.

Being far-reaching means  
returning to the original point.

Therefore Tao is great.

Heaven is great.

Earth is great.

And the king is also great.

There are four great things in the  
universe, and the king is one of  
them.

Man models himself after Earth.

Earth models itself after Heaven.

Heaven models itself after Tao.

And Tao models itself after  
Nature.

(Henricks)

There was something formed out  
of chaos.

That was born before Heaven  
and Earth.

Quiet and still! Pure and deep!

It stands on its own and doesn't  
change.

It can be regarded as the mother  
of Heaven and Earth.

I do not yet know its name:

I "style" it "the Way."

Were I forced to give it a name, I  
would call it "the Great."

"Great" means "to depart";

"To depart" means "to be far  
away";

And "to be far away" means to  
"return."

The Way is great;

Heaven is great;

Earth is great;

And the king is also great.

In the country there are four  
greats, and the king occupies one  
place among them.

Man models himself on Earth;

The Earth models itself on

Heaven;

Heaven models itself on the

Way;

And the Way models itself on  
that which is so on its own.

(Waley)

There was something formless  
yet complete.

That existed before heaven and  
earth;

Without sound, without  
substance.

Dependent on nothing,  
unchanging.

All pervading, unailing.

One may think of it as the mother  
of all things under heaven.

Its true name we don't know;

'Way' is the by-name that we  
give it.

Were I forced to say what class  
of things it belongs I should call it  
Great (*ta*).

Now *ta* also means passing on,  
and passing on means going Far  
Away,

And going far away means  
returning.

Thus just as Tao has 'this  
greatness' and as earth has it and  
as heaven has it, so may the ruler  
also have it. Thus 'within the realm  
there are four portions of  
greatness', and on belongs to the  
king. The ways of men are  
conditioned by those of earth. The  
ways of earth, by those of heaven.  
The ways of heaven by those of  
Tao. and the ways of Tao by the  
Self-so.

(Lin)

Before the Heaven and Earth  
existed

There was something nebulous:  
Silent, isolated.

Standing alone, changing not.  
Eternally revolving without fail.

Worthy to be the Mother of All  
Things.

I do not know its name

And address it as Tao.

If forced to give it a name, I shall  
call it "Great."

Being great implies reaching out  
in space,

Reaching out in space implies  
far-reaching

Far-reaching implies reversion to  
the original point.

Therefore:

Tao is Great.

The Heaven is great.

The Earth is great.

The King is also great.

These are the Great Four in the  
universe,

And the King is one of them.

Man models himself after the  
Earth;

The Earth models itself after  
Heaven;

The Heaven models itself after  
Tao;

Tao models itself after Nature.

(Cleary)

Something undifferentiated was  
born before heaven and earth;  
still and silent, standing alone  
and unchanging.

going through cycles unending,  
able to be mother to the world.

I do not know its name;

I label it the Way.

Imposing on it a name.

I call it Great.

Greatness means it goes;

going means reaching afar;

reaching afar means return.

Therefore the Way is great.  
heaven is great.

earth is great,

and kingship is also great.

Among domains are four greats,

of which kingship is one.

Humanity emulates earth,

earth emulates heaven,

heaven emulates the Way,

the Way emulates Nature.

(Feng&English)

Something mysteriously formed.

Born before heaven and earth.

In the silence and the void.

Standing alone and unchanging.

Ever present and in motion.

Perhaps it is the mother of ten  
thousand things.

I do not know its name

Call it Tao.

For lack of a better word, call it  
great.

Being great, it flows.

It flows far away.

Having gone far it returns.

Therefore, "Tao is great;

Heaven is great;

Earth is great;

The king is also great;"

These are the four great powers  
of the universe,

And the king is one of them.

Man follows the earth.

Earth follows heaven.

Heaven follows the Tao.

Tao follows what is natural.

(Wu)--TWENTY-SIX

Heaviness is the root of lightness.  
Serenity is the master of  
restlessness.

Therefore, the Sage, traveling all  
day.

Does not part with the baggage-  
wagon:

Though there may be gorgeous  
sights to see.

He stays at ease in his own  
home.

Why should a lord of ten  
thousand chariots

Display his lightness to the  
world?

To be light is to be separated  
from one's root;

To be restless is to lose one's  
self-mastery.

(Lau)

The heavy is the root of the light;  
The still is the lord of the  
restless.

Therefore the gentleman when  
traveling all day

Never lets the heavily laden carts  
out of his sight.

It is only when he is safely  
behind walls and watch-towers  
That he rests peacefully and is  
above worries.

How, then, should a ruler of ten  
thousand chariots

Make light his own person in the  
eyes of the empire?

If light, then the root is lost;

If restless, then the lord is lost.

(Chan)

The heavy is the root of the light.  
The tranquil is the ruler of the  
hasty.

Therefore the sage travels all day  
Without leaving his baggage.

Even at the sight of magnificent  
scenes.

He remains leisurely and  
indifferent.

How is it that a lord of ten  
thousand chariots

Should behave lightheartedly in  
his empire?

If he is lighthearted, the minister  
will be destroyed.

If he is hasty, the ruler is lost.

(Henricks)

The heavy is the root of the light;  
Tranquillity is the Lord of  
agitation.

Therefore the gentleman, in  
traveling all day, does not get far  
away from his luggage carts.

When he's safely inside a walled-  
in protected hostel and resting at  
ease--only then does he transcend  
all concern.

How can the king of ten thousand  
chariots treat his own person more  
lightly than the whole land?!

If you regard things too lightly,  
then you lose the basic;

If you're agitated, you lose the  
"lord."

(Waley)

As the heavy must be the  
foundation of the light.

So quietness is lord and master  
of activity.

Truly, 'A man of consequence  
though he travels all day

Will not let himself be separated  
from his baggage-wagon,

However magnificent the view,  
he sits quiet and dispassionate'.

How much less, then, must the  
lord of ten thousand chariots

Allow himself to be lighter than  
these he rules!

If he is light, the foundation is  
lost;

If he is active, the lord and  
master is lost.

(Lin)

The Solid is the root of the light;  
The Quiescent is the master of  
the Hasty.

Therefore the Sage travels all  
day

Yet never leaves his provision-  
cart.

In the midst of honor and glory,  
He lives leisurely, undisturbed.

How can a ruler of a great  
country

Make light of his body in the  
empire?

In light frivolity, the Center is  
lost;

In hasty action, self-mastery is  
lost.

(Cleary)

Gravity is the root of lightness;  
calm is the master of excitement.

Thereby do exemplary people  
travel all day

without leaving their equipment.  
Though they have a look of

prosperity,  
their resting place is  
transcendent.

What can be done about heads of  
state

who take the world lightly in  
their own self-interest?

Lack of gravity loses servants of  
state;

instability loses heads of state.

(Feng&English)

The heavy is the root of the light;  
The still is the master of unrest.

Therefore the sage, traveling all  
day,

Does not lose sight of his  
baggage.

Though there are beautiful things  
to be seen,

He remains unattached and calm.

Why should the lord of ten  
thousand chariots act lightly in  
public?

To be light is to lose one's root.

To be restless is to lose one's  
control.

(Wu)--TWENTY-SEVEN

Good walking leaves no track  
behind it;

Good speech leaves no mark to  
be picked at;

Good calculation makes no use  
of counting slips;

Good shutting makes no use of  
bolt and bar,

And yet nobody can undo it;

Good tying makes no use of rope  
and knot.

And yet nobody can untie it.

Hence, the Sage is always good  
at saving men.

And therefore nobody is  
abandoned;

Always good at saving things,

And therefore nothing is wasted.

This is called "following the  
guidance of the Inner Light."

Hence, good men are teachers of  
bad men,

While bad men are the charges of  
good men.

Not to revere one's teacher,

Not to cherish one's charge,

Is to be on the wrong road,

however intelligent one may be.

This is an essential tenet of the  
Tao.

(Lau)

One who excels in traveling  
leaves no wheel tracks;

One who excels in speech makes  
no slips;

One who excels in reckoning  
uses no counting rods;

One who excels in shutting uses  
no bolts yet what he has shut  
cannot be opened;

One who excels in tying uses no  
chords yet what he has tied cannot  
be undone.

Therefore the sage always excels  
in saving people, and so abandons  
no one; always excels in saving  
things, and so abandons nothing.

This is called following one's  
discernment.

Hence the good man is the  
teacher the bad man learns from;

And the bad man is the material  
the good works on.

Not to value the teacher

Nor to love the material

Though it seems clever, betrays  
great bewilderment.

This is called the essential and  
the secret.

(Chan)

A good traveler leaves no track  
or trace.

A good speech leaves no flaws.  
A good reckoner uses no  
counters.

A well-shut door needs o bolts,  
and yet it cannot be opened.

A well-tied knot needs no rope  
and yet none can untie it.

Therefore the sage is always  
good in saving men and  
consequently no man is rejected.

He is always good in saving  
things and consequently nothing is  
rejected.

This is called following the light  
(of Nature)

Therefore the good man is the  
teacher of the bad,

And the bad is the material from  
which the good may learn.

He who does not value the  
teacher,

Or greatly care for the material,  
Is greatly deluded although he  
may be learned.

Such is the essential mystery.

(Henricks)

The good traveler leaves no track  
behind;

The good speaker speaks without  
blemish or flaw;

The good counter doesn't use  
tallies or chips;

The good closer of doors does so  
without bolt or lock, and yet the  
door cannot be opened;

The good tier of knots ties  
without rope or cord, yet his knots  
can't be undone.

Therefore the Sage is constantly  
good at saving men and never  
rejects anyone;

And with things, he never rejects  
useful goods.

This is called Doubly Bright.

Therefore the good man is the  
teacher of the good,

And the bad man is the raw  
material for the good.

To not value one's teacher and  
not cherish the raw goods--

Though one had great  
knowledge, he would still be  
greatly confused.

This is called the Essential of the  
Sublime.

(Waley)

Perfect activity leaves no track  
behind it;

Perfect speech is like a jade-  
worker whose tool leaves no mark.

The perfect reckoner needs no  
counting-slips;

The perfect door has neither bolt  
nor bar.

Yet cannot be opened.

The perfect knot needs neither  
rope nor twine,

Yet cannot be untied.

Therefore the Sage

Is all the time in the most perfect  
way helping men,

He certainly does not turn his  
back on men;

Is all the time in the most perfect  
way helping creatures,

He certainly does not turn his  
back on creatures.

This is called resorting to the  
Light.

Truly, 'the perfect man is the  
teacher of the imperfect;

But the imperfect is the stock-in-  
trade of the perfect man'.

He who does not respect his  
teacher.

He who does not take care of his  
stock-in-trade,

Much learning though he  
possess, is far astray.

This is the essential secret.

(Lin)

A good runner leaves no track.

A good speech leaves no flaws to  
attack.

A good reckoner makes use of no  
counters.

A well shut door makes use of no  
bolts.

And yet cannot be opened.

A well-tied knot makes use of no  
rope.

And yet cannot be untied.

Therefore the Sage is good at  
helping men;

For that reason there is no  
rejected (useless) person.

He is good at saving things;

For that reason there is nothing  
rejected.

--This is call stealing the Light.

Therefore the good man is the  
Teacher of the bad.

And the bad is the lesson of the  
good.

He who neither values his teacher

Nor loves the lesson

Is one gone far astray,

Though he be learned.

--Such is the subtle secret.

(Cleary)

Good works are trackless.

good words are flawless,  
good planning isn't calculating.

What is well closed has no bolt  
locking it.

but cannot be opened.

What is well bound has no rope  
confining it.

but cannot be untied.

Therefore sages always consider  
it good to save people,

so that there are no wasted  
humans;

they always consider it good to  
save beings,

so that there are no wasted  
beings.

So good people are teachers

of people who are not good.

People who are not good  
are students of people who are

good.

Those who do not honor teachers  
or care for students

are greatly deluded, even if  
knowledgeable.

This is called an essential  
subtlety.

(Feng&English)

A good walker leaves no tracks:

A good speaker makes no slips:

A good reckoner needs no tally.

A good door needs no lock.

Yet none can open it.

Good binding requires no knots.

Yet no one can loosen it.

Therefore the sage takes care of  
all men

And abandons no one.

He takes care of all things

And abandons nothing.

This is called "following the  
light."

What is a good man?

A teacher of a bad man.

What is a bad man?

A good man's charge.

If the teacher is not respected,

And the student not cared for,

Confusion will arise, however  
clever one is.

This is the crux of mystery.



(Wu)--TWENTY-EIGHT

Know the masculine.  
Keep to the feminine.  
And be the Brook of the World.  
To be the Brook of the World is  
To move constantly in the path  
of Virtue.  
Without swerving from it.  
And to return again to infancy.  
Know the white.  
Keep to the black.  
And be the Pattern of the World.  
To be the Pattern of the World is  
to move constantly in the path of  
Virtue  
Without erring a single step,  
And to return again to the  
Infinite.  
Know the glorious.  
Keep to the lowly,  
And be the Fountain of the  
World.  
To be the Fountain of the World  
is  
To live the abundant life of  
Virtue,  
And to return again to Primal  
Simplicity.  
When Primal Simplicity  
diversifies.  
It becomes useful vessels,  
Which, in the hands of the Sage,  
becomes officers.  
Hence, "a great tailor does little  
cutting."

(Lau)

Know the male  
But keep to the role of the female  
And be a ravine to the empire.  
If you are a ravine to the empire.  
Then the constant virtue will not  
desert you  
And you will again return to  
being a babe.  
Know the white  
But keep to the role of the black  
And be a model to the empire.  
If you are a model to the empire,  
Then the constant virtue will not  
be wanting  
And you will return to the  
infinite.  
Know honour  
but keep to the role of the  
disgraced  
And be a valley to the empire.  
If you are a valley to the empire,  
Then the constant virtue will be  
sufficient  
And you will return to being the  
uncarved block.  
When the uncarved block  
shatters it becomes vessels.  
The sage makes use of these and  
becomes the lord over the officials.  
Hence the greatest cutting  
Does not sever.

(Chan)

He who knows the male (active  
force) and keeps to the female (the  
passive force or receptive element)  
Becomes the ravine of the world.  
Being the ravine of the world.  
He will never depart from eternal  
virtue.  
But returns to the state of  
infancy.  
He who knows the white (glory)  
and yet keeps to the black  
(humility),  
Becomes the model for the world.  
Being the model for the world.  
He will never deviate from  
eternal virtue.  
But returns to the state of the  
Ultimate of Non-being.  
He who knows glory but keeps to  
humility,  
Becomes the valley of the world.  
Being the valley of the world.  
He will be proficient in eternal  
virtue.  
And returns to the state of  
simplicity (uncarved wood).  
When the uncarved wood is  
broken up, it is turned into  
concrete things (as Tao is  
transformed into the myriad  
things).  
But when the sage uses it, he  
becomes the leading official.  
Therefore the great ruler does not  
cut up.

(Henricks)

When you know the male yet  
hold to the female,  
You'll be the ravine of the  
country.  
When you're the ravine of the  
country,  
Your constant virtue will not  
leave.  
And when your constant virtue  
doesn't leave,  
You'll return to the state of the  
infant.  
When you know the pure yet  
hold on to the soiled,  
You'll be the valley of the  
country.  
When you're the valley of the  
country,  
Your constant virtue is complete.  
And when your constant virtue is  
complete,  
You'll return to the state of  
uncarved wood.  
When you know the white yet hold  
on to the black,  
You'll be the model for the country.  
And when you're the model of the  
country,  
Your constant virtue will not go  
astray.  
And when your constant virtue does  
not go astray,  
You'll return to the condition which  
has no limit.  
When uncarved wood is cut up, it's  
turned into vessels;  
When the Sage is used, he becomes  
the Head of Officials.  
Truly, great carving is done without  
splitting up.

(Waley)

'He who knows the male, yet  
cleaves to what is female  
Becomes like a ravine, receiving  
all things under heaven.'  
And being such a ravine  
He knows all the time a power  
that he never calls upon in vain.  
This is returning to the state of  
infancy.  
He who knows the white, yet  
cleaves to the black  
Becomes the standard by which  
all things are tested;  
And being such a standard  
He has all the time a power that  
never errs,  
He returns to the Limitless.  
He who knows glory, yet cleaves  
to ignominy  
Becomes like a valley that  
receives into it all things under  
heaven,  
And being such a valley  
He has all the time a power that  
suffices;  
He returns to the state of an  
Uncarved Block.  
Now when a block is sawed up it  
is made into implements;  
But when the Sage uses it, it  
becomes Chief of all Ministers.  
Truly, 'The greatest carver does  
the least cutting'.

(Lin)

He who is aware of the Male  
But keeps to the Female  
Becomes the ravine of the world.  
Being the ravine of the world,  
He has the eternal power which  
never fails.  
And returns again to the  
(innocence of) the babe.  
He who is conscious of the white  
(bright)  
But keeps to the black (dark)  
Becomes the model for the world.  
Being the model for the world,  
He has the eternal power which  
never errs.  
And returns again to the Primal  
Nothingness.  
He who is familiar with honor  
and glory  
But keeps to obscurity  
Becomes the valley of the world.  
Being the valley of the world,  
He has an eternal power which  
always suffices,  
And returns again to pristine  
simplicity.  
Break up this pristine simplicity  
And it is shaped into tools.  
In the hands of the Sage,  
They become the officials and  
magistrates.  
Therefore the great ruler does not  
cut up.

(Cleary)

Know the male, keep to the  
female;  
be humble toward the world.  
Be humble toward the world,  
and eternal power never leaves,  
returning again to innocence.  
Knowing the white, keep the  
black;  
be an exemplar for the world.  
Be an exemplar for the world,  
and eternal power never goes  
awry,  
returning again to infinity.  
Knowing the glorious, keep the  
ignominious;  
be open to the world.  
Be open to the world,  
and eternal power suffices,  
returning again to simplicity.  
Simplicity is lost to make  
instruments,  
which sages employ as  
functionaries.  
Therefore the great fashioner  
does no splitting.

(Feng&English)

Know the strength of a man.  
But keep a woman's care!  
Be the stream of the universe!  
Being the stream of the universe,  
Ever true and unswerving.  
Becomes as a little child once  
more.  
Know the white,  
But keep the black!  
Be an example to the world!  
Being an example to the world,  
Ever true and unwavering.  
Return to the infinite.  
Know honor.  
Yet keep humility.  
Be the valley of the universe!  
Being the valley of the universe,  
Ever true and resourceful.  
Return to the state of the  
uncarved block.  
When the block is carved, it  
becomes useful.  
When the sage uses it, he  
becomes the ruler.  
Thus, "A great tailor cuts little."

(Wu)--TWENTY-NINE

Does anyone want to take the world and do what he wants with it?

I don't see how he can succeed. The world is a sacred vessel, which must not be tampered with or grabbed after.

To tamper with it is to spoil it, and the grasp it is to lose it.

In fact, for all things there is a time for going ahead, and a time for following behind;

A time for slow-breathing and a time for fast breathing;

A time to grow in strength and a time to decay;

A time to be up and a time to be down.

Therefore, the Sage avoids all extremes, excesses and extravagances.

(Lau)

Whoever takes the empire and wishes to do anything to it I see will have no respite.

The empire is a sacred vessel and nothing should be done to it.

Whoever does anything to it will ruin it; whoever lays hold of it will lose it.

Hence some things lead and some follow;

Some breathe gently and some breathe hard;

Some are strong and some are weak;

Some destroy and some are destroyed.

Therefore the sage avoids excess, extravagance, and arrogance.

(Chan)

When one desire to take over the empire and act on it (interfere with it).

I see that he will not succeed.

The empire is a spiritual thing, and should not be acted on.

He who acts on it harms it.

He who holds on to it loses it.

Among creatures some lead and some follow.

Some blow hot and some blow cold.

Some are strong and some are weak.

Some may break and some may fall.

Therefore the sage discards the extremes, the extravagant, and the excessive.

(Henricks)

For those who would like to take control of the world and act on it--

I see that with this they simply will not succeed.

The world is a sacred vessel;

It is not something that can be acted upon.

Those who act on it destroy it;

Those who hold on to it lose it.

With things--some go forward, others follow;

Some are hot, others blow cold;

Some are firm, others submissive and weak.

Some rise up while others fall down.

Therefore the Sage:

Rejects the extreme, the excessive, and the extravagant.

(Waley)

Those that would gain what is  
under heaven by tampering with it-  
I have seen that they do not  
succeed.

For that which is under heaven is  
like a holy vessel, dangerous to  
tamper with.

Those that tamper with it, harm  
it.

Those that grab at it, lose it.  
For among the creatures of the  
world some go in front, some  
follow;

Some blow hot when others  
would be blowing cold.

Some are feeling vigorous just  
when others are worn out.

Some are loading just when  
others will be tilting out.

Therefore the Sage 'discards the  
absolute, the all-inclusive, the  
extreme.'

(Lin)

There are those who will conquer  
the world

And make of it (what they  
conceive or desire).

I see that they will not succeed.

(For) the world is God's own  
Vessel

It cannot be made (by human  
interference).

He who makes it spoils it.

He who holds it loses it.

For: Some things go forward,

Some things follow behind;

Some blow hot,

And some blow cold;

Some are strong,

And some are weak;

Some may break,

And some may fall.

Hence the Sage eschews excess,

eschews extravagance,

eschews pride.

(Cleary)

Should you want to take the  
world and contrive to do so.

I see you won't manage to finish.

The most sublime instrument in  
the world cannot be contrived.

Those who contrive spoil it;  
those who cling lose it.

So creatures sometimes go and  
sometimes follow,

sometimes puff and sometimes  
blow,

are sometimes strong and  
sometimes weak,

begin sometime and end  
sometime;

therefore sages remove extremes,

remove extravagance,

remove arrogance.

(Feng&English)

Do you think you can take over  
the universe and improve it?

I do not believe it can be done.

The universe is sacred.

You cannot improve it.

If you try to change it, you will  
ruin it.

If you try to hold it, you will lose  
it.

So sometimes things are ahead  
and sometimes they are behind:

Sometimes breathing is hard,  
sometimes it comes easily;

Sometimes there is strength and  
sometimes there is weakness;

Sometimes one is up and  
sometimes down.

Therefore the sage avoids  
extremes, excesses, and  
complacency.

(Wu)--THIRTY

He who knows how to guide a ruler in the path of Tao

Does not try to override the world with force of arms.

It is in the nature of a military weapon to turn against its wielder.

Wherever armies are stationed, thorny bushes grow.

After a great war, bad years invariably follow.

What you want is to protect efficiently your won state,

But not to aim at self-aggrandizement.

After you have attained your purpose,

You must not parade your success,

You must not boast of your ability,

You must not feel proud,

You must rather regret that you had not been able to prevent the war.

You must never think of conquering others by force.

For to be over-developed is to hasten decay.

And this is against Tao.

And what is against Tao will soon cease to be.

(Lau)

One who assists the ruler of men by means of the way does not intimidate the empire by a show of arms.

This is something which is liable to rebound.

Where troops have encamped

There will brambles grow;

In the wake of a mighty army

Bad harvests follow without fail.

One who is good aims only at bringing his campaign to a conclusion and dare not thereby intimidate.

Bring it to a conclusion but do not boast;

bring it to a conclusion but do not brag;

bring it to a conclusion but do not be arrogant;

bring it to a conclusion but only when there is no choice;

bring it to a conclusion but do not intimidate.

A creature in its prime doing harm to the old

Is known as going against the way.

That which goes against the way will come to an early end.

(Chan)

He who assists the ruler with Tao does not dominate the world with force.

The use of force usually brings requital.

Wherever armies are stationed, briars and thorns grow.

Great wars are always followed by famines.

A good (general) achieves his purpose and stops.

But does not dare to dominate the world.

He achieves his purpose but does not brag about it.

He achieves his purpose but does not boast about it.

He achieves his purpose but is not proud of it.

He achieves his purpose but only as an unavoidable step.

He achieves his purpose but does not aim to dominate.

(For) after things reach their prime, they begin to grow old,

Which means being contrary to Tao.

Whatever is contrary to Tao will soon perish.

(Henricks)

Those who assist their rulers in the Way.

Don't use weapons to commit violence in the world.

Such deeds easily rebound.

In places where armies are stationed, thorns and brambles will grow.

The good general achieves his result and that's all;

He does not use the occasion to seize strength from it.

He achieves his result but does not become arrogant;

He achieves his result but does not praise his deeds;

He achieves his result and yet does not brag.

He achieves his result, yet he abides with the result because he has no choice.

This is called achieving one's result without using force.

When things reach their prime, they get old;

We call this "not the Way."

What is not the Way will come to an early end.

(Waley)

He who by Tao purposes to help  
a ruler of men

Will oppose all conquest by force  
of arms;

For such things are wont to  
rebound.

Where armies are, thorns and  
brambles grow.

The raising of a great host  
Is followed by a year of dearth.

Therefore a good general effects  
his purpose and then stops;  
he does not take further  
advantage of his victory.

Fulfills his purpose and does not  
glory in what he has done;

Fulfills his purpose and does not  
boast of what he has done;

Fulfills his purpose, but takes no  
pride in what he has done;

Fulfills his purpose, but only as a  
step that could not be avoided.

Fulfills his purpose, but without  
violence;

For what has a time of vigour  
also has a time of decay.

This is against Tao.

And what is against Tao will  
soon perish.

(Lin)

He who by Tao purposes to help  
the ruler of men

Will oppose all conquest by force  
of arms.

For such things are wont to  
rebound.

Where armies are, thorns and  
brambles grow.

The raising of a great host..

Is followed by a year of dearth.

Therefore a good general effects  
his purpose and stops.

He dares not rely upon the  
strength of arms;

Effects his purpose and does not  
glory in it;

Effects his purpose and does not  
boast of it;

Effects his purpose and does not  
take pride in it;

Effects his purpose as a  
regrettable necessity;

Effects his purpose but does not  
love violence.

(For) such things age after  
reaching their prime.

That (violence) would be against  
the Tao.

And he who is against the Tao  
perishes young.

(Cleary)

Those who assist human leaders  
with the Way

do not coerce the world with  
weapons.

for these things are apt to  
backfire.

Brambles grow where an army  
has been;

there are always bad years after  
a war.

Therefore the good are effective,  
that is all;

they do not presume to grab  
power thereby:

they are effective but not  
conceited.

effective but not proud.

effective but not arrogant.

They are effective when they  
have to be,

effective but not coercive.

If you peak in strength, you then  
age;

this, it is said, is unguided.

The unguided soon come to an  
end.

(Feng&English)

Whenever you advise a ruler in  
the way of Tao.

Counsel him not to use force to  
conquer the universe.

For this would only cause  
resistance.

Thorn bushes spring up wherever  
the army has passed.

Lean years follow in the wake of  
a great war.

Just do what needs to be done.

Never take advantage of power.

Achieve results.

But never glory in them.

Achieve results.

But never boast.

Achieve results.

But never be proud.

Achieve results.

Because this is the natural way.

Achieve results.

But not through violence.

Force is followed by loss of  
strength.

This is not the way of Tao.

That which goes against the Tao  
comes to an early end.

(Wu)--THIRTY-ONE

Fine weapons of war augur evil.

Even things seem to hate them.

Therefore, a man of Tao does not set his heart upon them.

In ordinary life, a gentleman regards the left side as the place of honour:

In war, the right side is the place of honour.

As weapons are instruments of evil.

They are not properly a gentleman's instruments:

Only on necessity will he resort to them.

For peace and quiet are dearest to his heart.

And to him even a victory is no cause for rejoicing.

To rejoice over a victory is to rejoice over the slaughter of men!

Hence a man who rejoices over the slaughter of men cannot expect to thrive in the world of men.

On happy occasions the left side is preferred:

On sad occasions the right side.

In the army, the Lieutenant Commander stands on the left.

While the Commander-in-Chief stands on the right.

This means that war is treated on a par with a funeral service.

Because many people have been killed, it is only right that survivors should mourn for them.

Hence, even a victory is a funeral.

(Lau)

It is because arms are instruments of ill omen and there are Things that detest them that one who has the way does not abide by their use.

The gentleman gives precedence to the left when at home, but to the right when he goes to war.

Arms are instruments of ill omen, not instruments of the gentleman.

When one is compelled to use them, it is best to do so without relish.

There is no glory in victory, and to glorify it despite this is to exult in the killing of men.

One who exults in the killing of men will never have his way in the empire.

On occasions of rejoicing precedence is given to the left; on occasions of mourning precedence is given to the right.

A lieutenant's place is on the left; the general's place is on the right.

This means that it is mourning rites that are observed.

When great numbers of people are killed, one should weep over them with sorrow.

When victorious in war, one should observe the rites of mourning.

(Chan)

Fine weapons are instruments of evil.

They are hated by men.

Therefore those who possess Tao turn away from them.

The good ruler when at home honors the left (symbolic of good omens).

When at war he honors the right (symbolic of evil omens).

Weapons are instruments of evil, not the instruments of a good ruler.

When he uses them unavoidably, he regards calm restraint as the best principle.

Even when he is victorious, he does not regard it as praiseworthy.

For to praise victory is to delight in the slaughter of men.

He who delights in the slaughter of men will not succeed in the empire.

In auspicious affairs, the left is honored.

In unauspicious affairs, the right is honored.

The lieutenant-general stands on the left.

The senior general stands on the right.

That is to say that the arrangement follows that of funeral ceremonies.

For the slaughter of the multitude, let us weep with sorrow and grief.

For a victory, let us observe the occasion with funeral ceremonies.

(Henricks)

As for weapons--they are instruments of ill omen.

And among things there are those that hate them.

Therefore, the one who has the Way, with them does not dwell.

When the gentleman is at home, he honors the left;

When at war, he honors the right.

Therefore, weapons are not the instruments of the gentleman--

Weapons are instruments of ill omen.

When you have no choice but to use them, it's best to remain tranquil and calm.

You should never look upon them as things of beauty.

If you see them as beautiful things--this is to delight in the killing of men.

And when you delight in the killing of men, you'll not realize your goal in the land.

Therefore, in happy events we honor the left,

But in mourning we honor the right.

Therefore, the lieutenant general stands on the left;

And the supreme general stands on the right.

Which is to say, they arrange themselves as they would at a funeral.

When multitudes of people are killed, we stand before them in sorrow and grief.

When we're victorious in battle, we treat the occasion like a funeral ceremony.

(Walcy)

Fine weapons are none the less ill-omened things.

That is why, among people of good birth, in peace the left-hand side is the place of honour, but in war this is reversed and the right-hand side is the place of honour.

The Quietist, even when he conquers, does not regard weapons as lovely things.

For to think them lovely means to delight in them, and to delight in them means to delight in the slaughter of men.

And he who delights in the slaughter of men will never get what he looks for out of those that dwell under heaven.

A host that has slain men is received with grief and mourning; he that has conquered in battle is received with rites of mourning.

(Lin)

Of all things, soldiers are instruments of evil, hated by men.

Therefore the religious man (possessed of Tao) avoids them.

The gentleman favors the left in civilian life.

But on military occasions favors the right.

Soldiers are weapons of evil.

They are not the weapons of the gentleman.

When the use of soldiers cannot be helped,

The best policy is calm restraint.

Even in victory, there is no beauty,

And who calls it beautiful

Is one who delights in slaughter.

He who delights in slaughter

Will not succeed in his ambition to rule the world.

[The things of good omen favor the left.

The things of ill omen favor the right.

The lieutenant-general stands on the left.

The general stands on the right.

That is to say, it is celebrated as a Funeral Rite.]

The slaying of multitudes should be mourned with sorrow.

A victory should be celebrated with the Funeral Rite.

(Cleary)

Fine weapons are instruments of ill omen: people may despise them, so those with the Way do not dwell with them.

Therefore the place of honor for the cultured is on the left,

while the honored place for the martialist is on the right.

Weapons, being instruments of ill omen, are not tools of the cultured,

who use them only when unavoidable.

They consider it best to be aloof; they win without beautifying it.

Those who beautify it enjoy killing people.

Those who enjoy killing cannot get their will of the world.

The left is favored for auspicious things,

the right for things of ill omen: so the subordinate general is on the left,

the top general is on the right.

That means that when you are in ascendancy of power you handle it as you would a mourning.

When you have killed many people, you weep for them in sorrow.

When you win a war, you celebrate by mourning.

(Feng&English)

Good weapons are instruments of fear; all creatures hate them.

Therefore followers of Tao never use them.

The wise man prefers the left.

The man of war prefers the right.

Weapons are instruments of fear: they are not a wise man's tools.

He uses them only when he has no choice.

Peace and quiet are dear to his heart.

And victory no cause for rejoicing.

If you rejoice in victory, then you delight in killing;

If you delight in killing, you cannot fulfill yourself.

On happy occasions precedence is given to the left.

On sad occasions to the right.

In the army the general stands on the left.

The commander-in-chief on the right.

This means that war is conducted like a funeral.

When many people are being killed,

They should be mourned in heartfelt sorrow.

That is why a victory must be observed like a funeral.



(Wu)--THIRTY-TWO

Tao is always nameless.  
Small as it is in its Primal  
Simplicity.

It is inferior to nothing in the  
world.

If only a ruler could cling to it,  
Everything will render homage to  
him.

Heaven and Earth will be  
harmonized

And send down sweet dew.

Peace and order will reign among  
the people

Without any command from  
above.

When once the Primal Simplicity  
diversified.

Different names appeared.

Are there not enough names  
now?

Is this not the time to stop?

To know when to stop is to  
preserve ourselves from danger.

The Tao is to the world what a  
great river or an ocean is to the  
streams and brooks.

(Lau)

The way is for ever nameless.  
Though the uncarved block is  
small

No one in the world dare claim  
its allegiance.

Should lords and princes be able  
to hold fast to it

The myriad creatures will submit  
of their own accord.

Heaven and earth will unite and  
sweet dew will fall.

And the people will be equitable,  
though no one so decrees.

Only when it is cut are there  
names.

As soon as there are names

On ought to know it is time to  
stop.

Knowing when to stop one can  
be free from danger.

The way is to the world as the  
River and the Sea are to rivulets  
and streams.

(Chan)

Tao is eternal and has no name.

Though its simplicity seems  
insignificant, none in the world can  
master it.

If kings and barons would hold  
on to it, all things would submit to  
them spontaneously.

Heaven and earth unite to drip  
sweet dew.

Without the command of men, it  
drips evenly over all.

As soon as there were regulations  
and institutions, there were names  
(differentiation of things).

As soon as there are names,  
know that it is time to stop.

It is by knowing when to stop  
that one can be free from danger.

Analogically, Tao in the world  
(where everything is embraced by  
it), may be compared to rivers and  
streams running into the sea.

(Henricks)

The Tao is constantly nameless.

Though in its natural state it  
seems small, no one in the world  
dares to treat it as a subject.

Were marquises and kings able  
to maintain it.

The ten thousand things would  
submit to them on their own.

And Heaven and Earth would  
unite to send forth sweet dew.

By nature it would fall equally  
on all things, with no one among  
the people ordering that it be so.

As soon as we start to establish a  
system, we have names.

And as soon as there are set  
names,

Then you must *also* know that  
it's time to stop.

By knowing to stop -- in this way  
you'll come to no harm.

The Way's presence in the world  
Is like the relationship of small  
valley streams to rivers and seas.

(Waley)

Tao is eternal, but has no fame  
(name);

The Uncarved Block, though  
seemingly of small account.

Is greater than anything that is  
under heaven.

If kings and barons would but  
possess themselves of it.

The ten thousand creatures  
would flock to do them homage;

Heaven-and-earth would  
conspire

To send Sweet Dew.

Without law or compulsion, men  
would dwell in harmony.

Once the block is carved, there  
will be names,

And so soon as there are names  
Know that it is time to stop.

Only by knowing when it is time  
to stop can danger be avoided.

To Tao all under heaven will  
come

As streams and torrents flow into  
a great river or sea.

(Lin)

Tao is absolute and has no name.

Though the uncarved wood is  
small.

It cannot be employed (used as  
vessel) by anyone.

If kings and barons can keep  
(this unspoiled nature).

The whole world shall yield them  
lordship of their own accord:

The Heaven and Earth join.

And the sweet rain falls.

Beyond the command of men.

Yet evenly upon all.

The human civilization arose and  
there were names.

Since names there were,

It were well one knew where to  
stop for repose.

How who knows where to stop  
for repose

May from danger be exempt.

Tao in the world may be  
compared

To rivers that run into the sea.

(Cleary)

The Way is eternally nameless.

Though simplicity is small.

the world cannot subordinate it.

If lords and monarchs can keep  
to it.

all beings will naturally resort to  
them.

Heaven and earth combine.

thus showering sweet dew.

No humans command it;

it is even by nature.

Start fashioning, and there are  
names;

once names also exist.

you should know when to stop.

By knowing when to stop,

you are not endangered.

The Way is to the world  
as rivers and oceans to valley  
streams.

(Feng&English)

The Tao is forever undefined.

Small though it is in the  
unformed state, it cannot be  
grasped.

If kings and lords could harness  
it.

The ten thousand things would  
naturally obey.

Heaven and earth would come  
together

And gentle rain fall.

Men would need no more  
instruction and all things would  
take their course.

Once the whole is divided, the  
parts need names.

There are already enough names.

One must know when to stop.

Knowing when to stop averts  
trouble.

Tao in the world is like a river  
flowing home to the sea.

(Wu)--THIRTY-THREE

He who knows men is clever;  
He who knows himself has  
insight.

He who conquers men has force;  
He who conquers himself is truly  
strong.

He who knows when he has got  
enough is rich.

And he who adheres assiduously  
to the path of Tao is a man of  
steady purpose.

He who stays where he has found  
his true home endures long.

And he who dies but perishes not  
enjoys real longevity.

(Lau)

He who knows other is clever;  
He who knows himself has  
discernment.

He who overcomes others has  
force;

He who overcomes himself is  
strong.

He who knows contentment is  
rich;

He who perseveres is a man of  
purpose;

He who does not lose his station  
will endure;

He who lives out his days has  
had a long life.

(Chan)

He who knows others is wise;  
He who knows himself is  
enlightened.

He who conquers others has  
physical strength.

He who conquers himself is  
strong.

He who is contented is rich.

He who acts with vigor has will.

He who does not lose his place  
(with Tao) will endure.

He who dies but does not really  
perish enjoys long life.

(Henricks)

To understand others is to be  
knowledgeable;

To understand yourself is to be  
wise.

To conquer others is to have  
strength;

To conquer yourself is to be  
strong.

To know when you have enough  
is to be rich.

To go forward with strength is to  
have ambition.

To not lose your place is to last  
long.

To die but not be forgotten --  
that's true long life.

(Waley)

To understand others is to have  
knowledge;

To understand oneself is to be  
illuminated.

To conquer others needs  
strength:

To conquer oneself is harder still.

To be content with what one has  
is to be rich.

He that works through violence  
may get his way;

But only what stays in its place  
can endure.

When one dies one is not lost;  
there is no other longevity.

(Lin)

He who knows others is learned;

He who knows himself is wise.

He who conquers others has  
power of muscles;

He who conquers himself is  
strong.

He who is contented is rich.

He who is determined has  
strength of will.

He who does not lose his center  
endures.

He who dies yet (his power)  
remains has long life.

(Cleary)

Those who know others are wise;  
those who know themselves are  
enlightened.

Those who overcome others are  
powerful;

those who overcome themselves  
are strong.

Those who are contented are  
rich;

those who act strongly have will.

Those who do not lose their place  
endure;

those who die without perishing  
live long.

(Feng&English)

Knowing others is wisdom;

Knowing the self is  
enlightenment.

Mastering others requires forces;

Mastering the self needs strength.

He who knows he has enough is  
rich.

Perseverance is a sign of  
willpower.

He who stays where he is  
endures.

To die but not to perish is to be  
eternally present.

(Wu)--THIRTY-FOUR

The Great Tao is universal like a flood.

How can it be turned to the right or to the left?

All creatures depend on it.

And it denies nothing to anyone.

It does its work.

But it makes no claims for itself.

It clothes and feeds all.

But it does not lord it over them:

Thus, it may be called "the

Little."

All things return to it as to their home.

But it does not lord it over them:

Thus, it may be called "the Great."

It is just because it does not wish to be great

That its greatness is fully realized.

(Lau)

The way is broad, reaching to the left as well as right.

The myriad creatures depend on it for life yet it claims no authority.

It accomplishes its task yet lays claim to no merit.

It clothes and feeds the myriad creatures yet lays no claim to being their master.

Forever free of desire, it can be called small; yet, as it lays no claim to being master when the myriad creatures turn to it, it can be called great.

It is because it never attempts itself to be great that it succeeds in becoming great.

(Chan)

The Great Tao flows everywhere.

It may go left or right.

All things depend on it for life, and it does not turn away from them.

It accomplishes its task, but does not claim credit for it.

It clothes and feeds all things but does not claim to be master over them.

Always without desires, it may be called The Small.

All things come to it and it does not master them;

it may be called The Great.

Therefore (the sage) never strives himself for the great; and thereby the great is achieved.

(Henricks)

The Way floats and drifts;

It can go left or right.

It accomplishes its tasks and completes its affairs, and yet for this it is not given a name.

The ten thousand things entrust their lives to it, and yet it does not act as their master.

Thus it is constantly without desires.

It can be named with the things that are small.

The ten thousand things entrust their lives to it, and yet it does not act as their master.

It can be named with the things that are great.

Therefore the Sage's ability to accomplish the great

Comes from his not playing the role of the great.

Therefore he is able to accomplish the great.

(Waley)

Great Tao is like a boat that drifts;

It can go this way; it can go that.

The ten thousand creatures owe their existence to it and it does not disown them;

Yet having produced them, it does not take possession of them.

Tao, though it covers the ten thousand things like a garment.

Makes no claim to be master over them.

Therefore it may be called the Lowly.

The ten thousand creatures obey it,

Though they know not that they have a master;

Therefore it is called the Great.

So too the Sage just because he never at any time makes a show of greatness in fact achieves greatness.

(Lin)

The Great Tao flows everywhere.

(Like a flood) it may go left or right.

The myriad things derive their life from it.

And it does not deny them.

When its work is accomplished.

It does not take possession.

It clothes and feeds the myriad things.

Yet it does not claim them as its own.

Often (regarded) without mind or passion,

It may be considered small.

Being the home of all things, yet claiming not,

It may be considered great.

Because to the end it does not claim greatness.

Its greatness is achieved.

(Cleary)

The Great Way is universal; it can apply to the left or the right.

All beings depend on it for life, and it does not refuse.

Its accomplishments fulfilled, it does not dwell on them.

It lovingly nurtures all beings, but does not act as their ruler.

As it has no desire, it can be called small.

As all beings take to it, yet it does not act as their ruler, it can be called great.

Therefore sages never contrive greatness; that is why they can become so great.

(Feng&English)

The great Tao flows everywhere, both to the left and to the right.

The ten thousand things depend upon it; it holds nothing back.

It fulfills its purpose silently and makes no claim.

It nourishes the ten thousand things.

And yet is not their lord.

It has no aim; it is very small.

The ten thousand things return to it.

Yet it is not their lord.

It is very great.

It does not show greatness.

And is therefore truly great.

(Wu)--THIRTY-FIVE

He who holds the Great Symbol  
will attract all things to him.

They flock to him and receive no  
harm. for in him they find peace,  
security and happiness.

Music and dainty dishes can only  
make a passing guest pause.

But the words of Tao possess  
lasting effects.

Though they are mild and  
flavourless.

Though they appeal neither to the  
eye nor to the ear.

(Lau)

Have in your hold the great  
image

And the empire will come to you.  
Coming to you and meeting with  
no harm

It will be safe and sound.

Music and food

Will induce the wayfarer to stop.

The way in its passage through  
the mouth is without flavour.

It cannot be seen.

It cannot be heard,

Yet it cannot be exhausted by  
use.

(Chan)

Hold fast to the great form

(Tao),

And all the world will come.

They come and will encounter no  
harm;

But enjoy comfort, peace, and  
health.

When there are music and  
dainties,

Passing strangers will stay.

But the words uttered by Tao,

How insipid and tasteless!

We look at Tao; it is

imperceptible.

We listen to it; it is inaudible.

We use it; it is inexhaustible.

(Henricks)

Hold on to the Great Image and  
the whole world will come to you.

Come to you and suffer no harm;  
but rather know great safety and  
peace.

Music and food -- for these  
passing travelers stop.

Therefore, of the Tao's speaking  
we say:

Inspid, it is! It's lack of flavor.

When you look at it, it's not  
sufficient to be seen.

When you listen to it, it's not  
sufficient to be heard;

Yet when you use it, it can't be  
used up.

(Waley)

He who holding the Great Form  
goes about his work in the empire  
Can go about his work, yet do no  
harm.

All is peace, quietness and  
security.

Sound of music, smell of good  
dishes

Will make the passing stranger  
pause.

How different the words that Tao  
gives forth!

So thin, so flavourless!

If one looks for Tao, there is  
nothing solid to see;

If one listens for it, there is  
nothing loud enough to hear.

Yet if one uses it, it is  
inexhaustible.

(Lin)

Hold the Great Symbol  
And all the world follows.  
Follows without meeting harm.  
(And lives in) health, peace,  
commonwealth.

Offer good things to eat  
And the wayfarer stays.  
But Tao is mild to the taste.  
Looked at, it cannot be seen;  
Listened to, it cannot be heard;  
Applied, its supply never fails.

(Cleary)

When holding the Great Image,  
the world goes on and on without  
harm.

peaceful, even, tranquil.

Where there is music and dining,

passing travelers stop;

but the issue of the Way  
is so plain as to be flavorless.

When you look at it, it is

invisible;

when you listen to it, it is

inaudible;

when you use it, it cannot be  
exhausted.

(Feng&English)

All men will come to him who  
keeps to the one.

For there lie rest and happiness  
and peace.

Passersby may stop for music  
and good food.

But a description of the Tao  
Seems without substance or  
flavor.

It cannot be seen, it cannot be  
heard.

And it cannot be exhausted.



(Wu)--THIRTY-SIX

What is in the end to be  
shrunk.

Begins by being first stretched  
out.

What is in the end to be  
weakened.

Begins by being first made  
strong.

What is in the end to be thrown  
down.

Begins by being first set on high.  
What is in the end to be  
despoiled.

Begins by being first richly  
endowed.

Herein is the subtle wisdom of  
life:

The soft and weak overcomes the  
hard and strong.

Just as the fish must not leave the  
deeps.

So the ruler must not display his  
weapons.

(Lau)

If you would have a thing shrink.

You must first stretch it;

If you would have a thing  
weakened,

You must first strengthen it;

If you would have a thing laid  
aside.

You must first set it up;

If you would take from a thing,

You must first give to it.

This is called subtle discernment:  
The submissive and weak will  
overcome the hard and strong.

The fish must not be allowed to  
leave the deep;

The instruments of power in a  
state must not be revealed to  
anyone.

(Chan)

In order to contract.

It is necessary first to expand.

In order to weaken.

It is necessary first to strengthen.

In order to destroy.

It is necessary first to promote.

In order to grasp,

It is necessary first to give.

This is called subtle light.

The weak and the tender  
overcome the hard and the strong.

Fish should not be taken away  
from water.

And sharp weapons of the state  
should not be displayed to the  
people.

(Henricks)

If you wish to shrink it.

You must certainly stretch it.

If you wish to weaken it.

You must certainly strengthen it.

If you wish to desert it.

You must certainly work closely  
with it.

If you wish to snatch something  
from it,

You must certainly give  
something to it.

This is called the Subtle Light.

The submissive and weak  
conquer the strong.

Fish should not be taken out of  
the depths;

The state's sharp weapons should  
not be shown to the people.

(Waley)

What is in the end to be shrunk  
Must first be stretched.  
Whatever is to be weakened  
Must begin by being made  
strong.  
What is to be overthrown  
Must begin by being set up.  
He who would be a taker  
Must begin as a giver.  
This is called 'dimming' one's  
light.  
It is thus that the soft overcomes  
the hard  
And the weak, the strong.  
'It is best to leave a fish down in  
his pool;  
Best to leave the State's sharpest  
weapons where none can see them.'

(Lin)

He who is to be made to dwindle  
(in power)  
Must first be caused to expand.  
He who is to be weakened  
Must first be made strong.  
He who is to be laid low  
Must first be exalted to power.  
He who is to be taken away from  
Must first be given.  
-- This is the Subtle Light.  
Gentleness overcomes strength:  
Fish should be left in the deep  
pool,  
And sharp weapons of the state  
should be left  
Where none can see them.

(Cleary)

Should you want to contain  
something,  
you must deliberately let it  
expand.  
Should you want to weaken  
something,  
you must deliberately let it grow  
strong.  
Should you want to eliminate  
something,  
you must deliberately allow it to  
flourish.  
Should you want to take  
something away,  
you must deliberately grant it.  
This is called subtle illumination.  
Flexibility and yielding  
overcome adamant coerciveness.  
Fish shouldn't be taken from the  
depths;  
the effective tools of the nation  
shouldn't be shown to others.

(Feng&English)

That which shrinks  
Must first expand.  
That which fails  
Must first be strong.  
That which is cast down  
Must first be raised.  
Before receiving  
There must be giving.  
This is called perception of the  
nature of things.  
Soft and weak overcome hard  
and strong.  
Fish cannot leave deep waters.  
And a country's weapons should  
not be displayed.

(Wu)--THIRTY-SEVEN

Tao never makes any ado,  
And yet it does everything.  
If a ruler can cling to it,  
All things will grow of  
themselves.

When they have grown and tend  
to make a stir,

It is time to keep them in their  
place by the aid of the nameless  
Primal Simplicity,

Which alone can curb the desires  
of men.

When the desires of men are  
curbed, there will be peace,

And the world will settle down of  
its own accord.

(Lau)

The way never acts yet nothing is  
left undone.

Should lords and princes be able  
to hold fast to it,

The myriad creatures will be  
transformed of their own accord.

After they are transformed,  
should desire raise its head,

I shall press it down with the  
weight of the nameless uncarved  
block.

The nameless uncarved block  
Is but freedom from desire,

And if I cease to desire and  
remain still,

The empire will be at peace of its  
own accord.

(Chan)

Tao invariably takes no action,  
and yet there is nothing left  
undone.

If kings and barons can keep it,  
all things will transform  
spontaneously.

If, after transformation, they  
should desire to be active,

I would restrain them with  
simplicity, which has no name.

Simplicity, which has no name,  
is free of desires.

Being free of desires, it is  
tranquil.

And the world will be at peace of  
its own accord.

(Henricks)

The Tao is constantly nameless.  
Were marquises and kings able  
to maintain it,

The ten thousand things would  
transform on their own.

Having transformed, were their  
desires to become active.

I would subdue them with the  
nameless simplicity.

Having subdued them with the  
nameless simplicity,

I would not disgrace them.

By not being disgraced, they will  
be tranquil.

And Heaven and Earth will of  
themselves be correct and right.

(Waley)

Tao never does;  
Yet through it all things are done.  
If the barons and kings would  
but possess themselves of it,  
The ten thousand creatures  
would at once be transformed.  
And if having been transformed  
they should desire to act,  
We must restrain them by the  
blankness of the Unnamed.  
The blankness of the Unnamed  
Brings dispassion;  
To be dispassionate is to be still.  
And so, of itself, the whole  
empire will be at rest.

(Lin)

The Tao never does.  
Yet through it everything is done.  
If kings and barons can keep the  
Tao,  
The world will of its own accord  
be reformed.  
When reformed and rising to  
action,  
Let it be restrained by the  
Nameless pristine simplicity.  
The Nameless pristine simplicity  
Is stripped of desire (for  
contention).  
By stripping of desire quiescence  
is achieved,  
And the world arrives at peace of  
its own accord.

(Cleary)

The Way is always uncontrived.  
yet there is nothing it doesn't do.  
If lords and monarchs could keep  
to it,  
all beings would evolve  
spontaneously.  
When they have evolved and  
want to act,  
I would stabilize them with the  
nameless simplicity.  
Even nameless simplicity would  
not be wanted.  
By not wanting, there is calm,  
and the world will straighten  
itself.

(Feng&English)

Tao abides in non-action.  
Yet nothing is left undone.  
If kings and lords observed this,  
The ten thousand things would  
develop naturally.  
If they still desire to act, They  
would return to the simplicity of  
formless substance.  
Without form there is no desire.  
Without desire there is  
tranquillity.  
And in this way all things would  
be at peace.

(Wu)--THIRTY-EIGHT

High Virtue is non-virtuous;  
Therefore it has Virtue.  
Low Virtue never frees itself  
from virtuousness;  
Therefore it has no Virtue.  
High Virtue makes no fuss and  
has no private ends to serve;  
Low Virtue not only fusses but  
has private ends to serve.  
High humanity fusses but has no  
private ends to serve.  
High morality not only fusses but  
has private ends to serve.  
High ceremony fusses but finds  
no response;  
Then it tries to enforce itself with  
rolled-up sleeves.  
Failing Tao, man resorts to  
Virtue.  
Failing Virtue, man resorts to  
humanity.  
Failing humanity, man resorts to  
morality.  
Failing morality, man resorts to  
ceremony.  
Now, ceremony is the merest  
husk of faith and loyalty;  
It is the beginning of all  
confusion and disorder.  
As to foreknowledge, it is only  
the flower of Tao.  
And the beginning of folly.  
Therefore, the full-grown man  
sets his heart upon the substance  
rather than the husk;  
Upon the fruit rather than the  
flower.  
Truly, he prefers what is within  
to what is without.

(Lau)

A man of the highest virtue does  
not keep to virtue and that is why  
he has virtue.  
A man of the lowest virtue never  
strays from virtue and that is why  
he is without virtue.  
The former never acts yet leaves  
nothing undone.  
The latter acts but there are  
things left undone.  
A man of the highest benevolence  
acts, but from no ulterior motive.  
A man of the highest rectitude  
acts but from ulterior motive.  
A man most conversant in the  
rites acts, but when no one  
responds rolls up his sleeves and  
resorts to persuasion by force.  
Hence when the way was lost  
there was virtue;  
when virtue was lost there was  
benevolence;  
when benevolence was lost there  
was rectitude;  
when rectitude was lost there  
were the rites.  
The rites are the wearing thin of  
loyalty and good faith  
And the beginning of disorder;  
Foreknowledge is the flowery  
embellishment of the way  
And the beginning of folly.  
Hence a man of large mind  
abides in the thick not in the thin,  
in the fruit and not in the flower.  
Therefore he discards the one  
and takes the other.

(Chan)

The man of superior virtue is not  
(conscious of) his virtue,  
And in this way he really possesses  
virtue.  
The man of inferior virtue never loses  
(sight of) his virtue,  
And in this way he loses his virtue.  
The man of superior virtue takes no  
action, but has no ulterior motive to do  
so.  
The man of inferior virtue takes  
action, and has an ulterior motive to do  
so.  
The man of superior humanity takes  
action, but has no ulterior motive to do  
so.  
The man of superior righteousness  
takes action, and has an ulterior motive  
to do so.  
The man of superior propriety takes  
action, and when people do not respond  
to it, he will stretch his arms and force  
it on them.  
Therefore, only when Tao is lost does  
the doctrine of virtue arise.  
When virtue is lost, only then does the  
doctrine of humanity arise.  
When humanity is lost, only then does  
the doctrine of righteousness arise.  
When righteousness is lost, only then  
does the doctrine of propriety arise.  
Now, propriety is a superficial  
expression of loyalty and faithfulness,  
and the beginning of disorder.  
Those who are the first to know have  
the flowers (appearance) of Tao but are  
the beginning of ignorance.  
For this reason the great man dwells  
in the thick (substantial), and does not  
rest with the thin (superficial).  
He dwells in the fruit (reality), and  
does not rest with the flower  
(appearance).  
Therefore he rejects the one, and  
accepts the other.

(Henricks)

The highest virtue is not virtuous;  
therefor it truly has virtue.  
The lowest virtue never loses sight  
of its virtue; therefore it has no true  
virtue.  
The highest virtue takes no action,  
yet it has no reason for acting this  
way.:  
The highest humanity takes action,  
yet it has no reason for acting this  
way.  
The highest righteousness takes  
action, and it has its reasons for  
acting this way;  
The highest propriety takes action,  
and when no one responds to it, then  
it angrily rolls up its sleeves and  
forces people to comply.  
Therefore, when the Way is lost,  
only then do we have virtue;  
When virtue is lost, only then do  
we have humanity;  
When humanity is lost, only then  
do we have righteousness;  
And when righteousness is lost,  
only then do we have propriety.  
As for propriety, it's but the thin  
edge of loyalty and sincerity, and the  
beginning of disorder.  
And foreknowledge is but the  
flower of the Way, and the  
beginning of stupidity.  
Therefore the Great Man  
Dwells in the thick and doesn't  
dwell in the thin;  
Dwells in the fruit and doesn't  
dwell in the flower.  
Therefore, he rejects that and takes  
this.

(Waley)

The man of highest 'power' does not reveal himself as a possessor of 'power':

Therefore he keeps his 'power'.

The man of inferior 'power' cannot rid it of the appearance of 'power':

Therefore he is in truth without 'power'.

The man of highest 'power' neither acts nor is there any who so regards him:

The man of inferior 'power' both acts and is so regarded.

The man of highest humanity, though he acts, is not so regarded;

Whereas a man of even the highest morality both acts and is so regarded.

While even he who is best versed in ritual not merely acts, but if people fail to respond then he will pull up his sleeves and advance upon them.

That is why it is said: "After Tao was lost, then came the 'power';

After the 'power' was lost, then came human kindness.

After human kindness was lost, then came morality,

After morality was lost, then came ritual.

Now ritual is the mere husk of loyalty and promisekeeping

And is indeed the first step towards brawling."

Foreknowledge may be the 'flower of doctrine',

But it is the beginning of folly.

Therefore the full-grown man takes his stand upon the solid substance and not upon the mere husk,

Upon the fruit and not upon the flower.

Truly, 'he rejects that and takes this'.

(Lin)

The man of superior virtue is not (conscious of his) virtue.

Hence he is virtuous.

The man of inferior virtue (is intent on) not losing virtue.

Hence he is devoid of virtue.

The man of superior virtue never acts, nor ever (does so) with an ulterior motive.

The man of inferior virtue acts, and (does so) with an ulterior motive.

The man of superior kindness acts, but (does so) without an ulterior motive.

The man of superior justice acts, and (does so) with an ulterior motive.

(But when) the man of superior *li* acts and finds no response.

He rolls up his sleeves to force it on others.

Therefore:

After Tao is lost, then (arises the doctrine of) kindness,

After kindness is lost, then (arises the doctrine of) justice.

After justice is lost, then (arises the doctrine of) *li*.

Now *li* is the thinning out of loyalty and honesty of heart,

And the beginning of chaos.

The prophets are the flowing of Tao

And the origin of folly.

Therefore the noble man dwells in the heavy (base),

And not in the thinning (end).

He dwells in the fruit,

And not in the flowering (expression).

Therefore he rejects the one and accepts the other.

(Cleary)

Higher virtue is not ingratiating; that is why it has virtue.

Lower virtue does not forget about reward:

that is why it is virtueless.

Higher virtue is uncontrived,

and there is no way to contrive it.

Lower virtue is created,

and there is a way to do it.

Higher humanity is created,

but there is no way to contrive it.

Higher duty is done,

and there is a way to do it.

Higher courtesy is done,

but no one responds to it;

so there is forceful repetition.

Therefore virtue comes after loss of the Way;

humanity comes after loss of

virtue,

duty comes after loss of

humanity,

courtesy comes after loss of

duty.

Manners mean loyalty and trust are thin,

and disarray's beginning.

Foresight is a flower of the Way,

and the beginning of ignorance

too.

Therefore great people dwell in the thick,

not the thin.

They abide in the substance,

not the flower.

So they leave the latter and take the former.

(Feng&English)

A truly good man is not aware of his goodness.

And is therefore good.

A foolish man tries to be good.

And is therefore not good.

A truly good man does nothing.

Yet leaves nothing undone.

A foolish man is always doing.

Yet much remains to be done.

When a truly kind man does something, he leaves nothing undone.

When a just man does something, he leaves a great deal to be done.

When a disciplinarian does something and no one responds.

He rolls up his sleeves in an attempt to enforce order.

Therefore when Tao is lost, there is goodness.

When goodness is lost, there is kindness.

When kindness is lost, there is justice.

When justice is lost, there is ritual.

Now ritual is the husk of faith and loyalty, the beginning of confusion.

Knowledge of the future is only a flowery trapping of Tao.

It is the beginning of folly.

Therefore the truly great man dwells on what is real and not what is on the surface.

Not the fruit and not the flower.

Therefore accept the one and reject the other.

(Wu)--THIRTY-NINE

From of old there are not lacking things that have attained Oneness.

The sky attained Oneness and became clear;

The earth attained Oneness and became calm;

The spirits attained Oneness and became charged with mystical powers;

The fountains attained Oneness and became full;

The ten thousand creatures attained Oneness and became reproductive;

Barons and princes attained Oneness and became sovereign rulers of the world.

All of them are what they are by virtue of Oneness.

If the sky is not clear, it would likely fall to pieces;

If the earth were not calm, it would likely burst into bits;

If the spirits were not charged with mystical powers, they would be likely to cease from being;

If the fountains were not full, they would be likely to dry up;

If the ten thousand creatures were not reproductive, they would be likely to come to extinction;

If the barons and princes were not the sovereign rulers, they would be likely to stumble and fall.

Truly, humility is the root from which greatness springs.

And the high must be built upon the foundations of the low.

That is why barons and princes style themselves "The Helpless one," "The Little One," and "The Worthless One."

Perhaps they too realize their dependence upon the lowly.

Truly, too much honour means no honour.

It is not wise to shine like jade and resound like stone-chimes.

(Lau)

Of old, these came to be in possession of the One:

Heaven in virtue of the One is limpid;

Earth in virtue of the One is settled; Gods in virtue of the One have their potencies;

The valley in virtue of the One is full;

The myriad creatures in virtue of the One are alive;

Lords and princes in virtue of the One become leaders in the empire.

It is the One that makes these what they are.

Without what makes it limpid heaven might spill;

Without what makes it settled earth might sink;

Without what gives them their potencies gods might spend themselves;

Without what makes it full the valley might run dry;

Without what keeps them alive the myriad creatures might perish;

Without what makes them leaders lords and princes might fall.

Hence the superior must have the inferior as root; the high must have the low as base.

Thus lords and princes refer to themselves as 'solitary', 'desolate', and 'hapless'.

This is taking the inferior as root. Is it not?

Hence the highest renown is without renown,

Not wishing to be one among many like jade

Nor to be aloof like stone.

(Chan)

Of old those that obtained the One: Heaven obtained the One and became clear.

Earth obtained the One and became tranquil.

The spiritual beings obtained the One and became divine.

The valley obtained the One and became full.

The myriad things obtained the One and lived and grew.

Kings and barons obtained the One and became rulers of the empire.

What made them so is the One.

If heaven had not thus become clear, it would crack.

If the earth had not thus become tranquil, it would soon be shaken.

If the spiritual beings had not thus become divine, they would soon wither away.

If the valley had not thus become full, it would soon be exhausted.

If the myriad things had not thus lived and grown, they would soon become extinct.

If kings and barons had not thus become honorable and high in position, they would soon fall.

Therefore humble station is the basis of honor.

The low is the foundation of the high.

For this reason kings and barons call themselves the orphaned, the lonely ones, the unworthy.

Is this not regarding humble station as the basis of honor? Is it not?

Therefore enumerate all the parts of a chariot as you may, and you still have no chariot.

Rather than jingle like jade.  
Rumble like the rocks.

(Henricks)

Of those in the past that attained the One --

Heaven, by attaining the One became clear;

Earth, by attaining the One became stable;

Gods, by attaining the One became divine;

Valleys, by attaining the One became full;

Marquises and kings, by attaining the One made the whole land ordered and secure.

Taking this to its logical conclusion we would say --

If heaven were not by means of it clear, it would, I'm afraid, shatter:

If the Earth were not by means of it stable, it would, I'm afraid, let go.

If the gods were not by means of it divine, they would, I'm afraid, be powerless.

If valleys were not by means of it full, they would, I'm afraid, dry up.

And if marquises and kings were not by means of it noble and high, they would, I'm afraid, topple and fall.

Therefore, it must be the case that the noble has the base as its root;

And it must be the case that the high has the low for its foundation.

Thus, for this reason, marquises and kings call themselves "The Orphan," "The Widower," and "The One Without Grain."

Therefore, they regard their large number of carriages as having no carriage.

And because they desire not to dazzle and glitter like jade,

But to remain firm and strong like stone.

(Waley)

As for the things that from of old  
have understood the Whole --

The sky through such  
understanding remains limpid.

Earth remains steady.

The spirits keep their holiness.

The abyss is replenished.

The ten thousand creatures bear  
their kind.

Barons and princes direct their  
people.

It is the whole that causes it.

Were it not so limpid, the sky  
would soon get torn.

Were it not for its steadiness, the  
earth would soon tip over.

Were it not for their holiness, the  
spirits would soon wither away.

Were it not for this replenishment,  
the abyss would go dry,

Were it not that the ten thousand  
creatures can bear their kind, they  
would soon become extinct.

Were the barons and princes no  
longer directors of people and for  
that reason honoured and exalted,  
they would soon be overthrown.

Truly the 'humble is the stem upon  
which the mighty grows,

The low is the foundation upon  
which the high is laid.'

That is why barons and princes  
refer to themselves as 'The Orphan',  
'The Needy', 'The Ill-provided'.

Is this not indeed a case of might  
rooting itself upon humility?

True indeed are the sayings:

'Enumerate the parts of a carriage,  
and you still have not explained what  
a carriage is,' and

'They did not want to tinkle like  
jade bells, while others resounded  
like stone-chimes.'

(Lin)

There were those in ancient times  
possessed of the One:

Through possession of the One, the  
Heave was clarified.

Through possession of the One, the  
Earth was stabilized.

Through possession of the One, the  
gods were spiritualized.

Through possession of the One, the  
valleys were made full.

Through possession of the One, all  
things lived and grew.

Through possession of the One, the  
princes and dukes became the  
ennobled of the people.

-- That was how each became so.

Without clarity, the Heavens might  
shake.

Without stability, the Earth might  
quake.

Without spiritual power, the gods  
might crumble.

Without being filled, the valley  
might crack.

Without the life giving power, all  
things might perish.

Without the ennobling power, the  
kings and barons might stumble and  
fall.

Therefore the nobility depend upon  
the common man for support.

And the exalted ones depend upon  
the lowly for their base.

That is why the princes and dukes  
call themselves "the orphaned", "the  
lonely one", "the unworthy".

Is it not true then that they depend  
upon the common man for support?

Truly, take down the parts of a  
chariot, and there is no chariot (left).

Rather than jingle like jade,

Rumble like the rocks.

(Cleary)

When unity was attained of old,  
heaven became clear by attaining

unity.

earth became steady by attaining  
unity.

spirit was quickened by attaining  
unity.

valley streams were filled by  
attaining unity,

all beings were born by attaining  
unity;

and by attaining unity lords acted  
rightly for the sake of the world.

What brought about this was  
unity:

without means of clarity, heaven  
may burst;

without means of steadiness,

earth may erupt;

without means of quickening,

spirit may be exhausted;

without means of filling, valley

streams may dry up;

without means of birth, all beings

may perish;

without means of acting rightly,

lords may stumble.

Therefore nobility is rooted in  
humility,

loftiness is based on lowliness.

This is why noble people refer to  
themselves as alone, lacking, and

unworthy.

Is this not being rooted in  
humility?

So there is no praise in repeated  
praise;

they don't want to be like jewels  
of like stones.

(Feng&English)

These things from ancient times  
arise from one:

The sky is whole and clear.

The earth is whole and firm.

The spirit is whole and strong.

The valley is whole and full.

The ten thousand things are  
whole and alive.

Kings and lords are whole, and  
the country is upright.

All these are in virtue of  
wholeness.

The clarity of the sky prevents its  
falling.

The firmness of the earth  
prevents its splitting.

The strength of the spirit  
prevents its being used up.

The fullness of the valley  
prevents its running dry.

The growth of the ten thousand  
things prevents their dying out.

The leadership of kings and lords  
prevents the downfall of the  
country.

Therefore the humble is the root  
of the noble.

The low is the foundation of the  
high.

Princes and lords consider  
themselves "orphaned".

"widowed", and "worthless".

Do they not depend on being  
humble?

Too much success is not an  
advantage.

Do not tinkle like jade

Or clatter like stone chimes.



(Wu)--FORTY

The movement of the Tao  
consists in Returning.

The use of the Tao consists in  
softness.

All things under heaven are born  
of the corporeal:

The corporeal is born of the  
Incorporeal.

(Lau)

Turning back is how the Way  
moves;

Weakness is the means the way  
employs.

The myriad creatures in the  
world are born from Something.

and Something from Nothing.

(Chan)

Reversion is the action of Tao.

Weakness is the function of Tao.

All things in the world come  
from being.

And being comes from non-  
being.

(Henricks)

"Reversal" is the movement of  
the Tao;

"Weakness" is the function of the  
Tao.

The things of the world originate  
in being.

And being originates in  
nonbeing.

(Waley)

In Tao the only motion is  
returning;

The only useful quality,  
weakness.

For though all creatures under  
heaven are the products of Being,

Being itself is the product of  
Not-being.

(Lin)

Reversion is the action of Tao.

Gentleness is the function of  
Tao.

The things of this world come  
from Being.

And Being (comes) from Non-  
being.

(Cleary)

Return is the movement of the

Way;

yielding is the function of the  
Way.

All things in the world are born  
of being;

being is born of nonbeing.

(Feng&English)

Returning is the motion of the  
Tao.

Yielding is the way of the Tao.

The ten thousand things are born  
of being.

Being is born of not being.

(Wu)--FORTY-ONE

When a wise scholar hears the Tao,

He practices it diligently.

When a mediocre scholar hears the Tao,

He wavers between belief and unbelief.

When a worthless scholar hears the Tao,

He laughs boisterously at it.

But if such a one does not laugh at it,

The Tao would not be the Tao!

The wise men of old have truly said:

The bright Way looks dim.

The progressive Way looks retrograde.

The smooth Way looks rugged.

High Virtue looks like an abyss.

Great whiteness looks spotted.

Abundant Virtue looks deficient.

Established Virtue looks shabby.

Solid Virtue looks as though

melted.

Great squareness has no corners.

Great talents ripen late.

Great sound is silent.

Great Form is shapeless.

The Tao is hidden and nameless;

Yet it alone knows how to render help and to fulfill.

(Lau)

When the best student hears about the way

He practices it assiduously;

When the average student hears about the way

It seems to him one moment there and gone the next;

When the worst student hears about the way

He laughs out loud.

If he did not laugh

It would be unworthy of being the way.

Hence the *Chien yen* has it:

The way that is bright seems dull;

The way that leads forward seems to lead backward;

The way that is even seems rough.

The highest virtue is like the valley;

The sheerest whiteness seems sullied;

Ample virtue seems defective;

Vigorous virtue seems indolent;

Plain virtue seems soiled;

The great square has no corners.

The great vessel takes long to complete;

The great note is rarefied in sound;

The great image has no shape.

The way conceals itself in being nameless.

It is the way alone that excels in bestowing and in accomplishing.

(Chan)

When the highest type of men hear Tao,

They diligently practice it.

When the average type of men hear Tao,

They half believe in it.

When the lowest type of men hear Tao,

They laugh heartily at it.

If they did not laugh at it, it would not be Tao.

Therefore there is the established saying:

The Tao which is bright appears dark.

The Tao which goes forward appears to fall backward.

The Tao which is level appears uneven.

Great virtue appears like a valley (hollow).

Great purity appears like disgrace.

Far-reaching virtue appears as if insufficient.

Solid virtue appears as if unsteady.

True substance appears to be changable.

The great square has no corners.

The great implement (or talent) is slow to finish (or mature).

Great music sounds faint.

Great form has no shape.

Tao is hidden and nameless.

Yet it is Tao alone that skillfully provides for all and brings them to perfection.

(Henricks)

When the highest type of men hear the Way, with diligence they're able to practice it;

When average men hear the Way, some things they retain and others they lose;

When the lowest of men hear the Way, they laugh out loud at it.

If they didn't laugh at it, it couldn't be regarded as the Way.

Therefore, there is a set saying about this that goes:

The bright Way appears to be dark;

The Way that goes forward appears to retreat;

The smooth Way appears uneven;

The highest virtue is empty like a valley;

The purest white appears to be soiled;

Vast virtue appears to be insufficient;

Firm virtue appears thin and weak;

The simplest reality appears to change.

The Great Square has no corners;

The Great Vessel takes long to complete;

The Great Tone makes little sound;

The Great Image has no shape.

The Way is Great but has no name.

Only the Way is good at beginning things and also good at bringing things to completion.

(Waley)  
When the man of highest capacities hears Tao  
He does his best to put it into practice.  
When the man of middling capacity hears Tao  
He is in two minds about it.  
When the man of low capacity hears Tao  
He laughs loudly at it.  
If he did not laugh, it would not be worth the name of Tao.  
Therefore the proverb has it:  
The way out into the light often looks dark.  
The way that goes ahead often looks as if it went back.  
The way that is least hilly often looks as if it went up and down.  
The 'power' that is really loftiest looks like an abyss,  
What is sheerest white looks blurred.  
The 'power' that is most sufficing looks inadequate,  
The 'power' that stands firmest looks flimsy.  
What is in its natural, pure state looks faded:  
The largest square has no corners.  
The greatest vessel takes the longest to finish.  
Great music has the faintest notes.  
The Great Form is without shape.  
For Tao is hidden and nameless.  
Yet Tao alone supports all things and brings them to fulfillment.

(Lin)  
When the highest type of men hear the Tao.  
They practice it diligently.  
When the mediocre type hear the Tao.  
They seem to be aware and yet unaware of it.  
When the lowest type hear the Tao.  
They break into loud laughter --  
If it were not laughed at, it would not be Tao.  
Therefore there is the established saying:  
"Who understands Tao seems dull of comprehension;  
Who is advanced in Tao seems to slip backwards;  
Who moves on the even Tao seems to go up and down."  
Superior virtue appears like a hollow (valley);  
Sheer white appears like tarnished;  
Great character appears like insufficient;  
Solid character appears like infirm;  
Pure worth appears like contaminated.  
Great space has no corners;  
Great talent takes long to mature;  
Great music is faintly heard;  
Great Form has no contour;  
And Tao is hidden without a name.  
It is this Tao that is adept at lending (its power) and bringing fulfillment.

(Cleary)  
When superior people hear of the Way.  
they carry it out with diligence.  
When middling people hear of the Way.  
it sometimes seems to be there, sometimes not.  
When lesser people hear of the Way,  
they ridicule it greatly.  
If they didn't laugh at it,  
it wouldn't be the Way.  
So there are constructive sayings on this:  
The Way of illumination seems dark,  
the Way of advancement seems retiring,  
the Way of equality seems to categorize;  
higher virtue seems empty,  
great purity seems ignominious,  
broad virtue seems insufficient,  
constructive virtue seems careless.  
Simple honesty seems changeable,  
great range has no boundaries,  
great vessels are finished late;  
the great sound has a rarefied tone,  
the great image has no form,  
the Way hides its namelessness.  
Only the Way can enhance and perfect.

(Feng&English)  
The wise student hears of the Tao and practices it diligently.  
The average student hears of the Tao and gives it thought now and again.  
The foolish student hears of the Tao and laughs aloud.  
If there were no laughter, the Tao would not be what it is.  
Hence it is said:  
The bright path seems dim;  
Going forward seems like retreat;  
The easy way seems hard;  
The highest Virtue seems empty;  
Great purity seems sullied;  
A wealth of Virtue seems inadequate;  
The strength of Virtue seems frail;  
Real Virtue seems unreal;  
The perfect square has no corners;  
Great talents ripen late;  
The highest notes are hard to hear;  
The greatest form has no shape.  
The Tao is hidden and without name.  
The Tao alone nourishes and brings everything to fulfillment.

(Wu)--FORTY-TWO

Tao gave birth to One,  
One gave birth to Two,  
Two gave birth to Three,  
Three gave birth to all the myriad  
things.

All the myriad things carry the  
*Yin* on their backs and hold the  
*Yang* in their embrace,

Deriving their vital harmony  
from the proper blending of the  
two vital Breaths.

What is more loathed by men  
than to be "helpless," "little," and  
"worthless"?

And yet these are the very names  
the princes and barons call  
themselves.

Truly, one may gain by losing;  
And one may lose by gaining.

What another has taught let me  
repeat:

"A man of violence will come to  
a violent end."

Whoever said this can be my  
teacher and my father.

(Lau)

The way begets one;  
one begets two;  
two begets three;  
three begets the myriad  
creatures.

The myriad creatures carry on  
their backs the *yin* and embrace in  
their arms the *yang* and are the  
blending of the generative forces of  
the two.

There are no words which men  
detest more than 'solitary',  
'desolate', and 'hapless', yet lords  
and princes use these to refer to  
themselves.

Thus a thing is sometimes added  
to by being diminished and  
diminished by being added to.

What others teach I also teach.

'The violent will not come to a  
natural end.'

I shall take this as my precept.

(Chan)

Tao produced the One,  
The One produced the two,  
The two produced the three,  
And the three produced the ten  
thousand things.

The ten thousand things carry the  
*yin* and embrace the *yang*,  
and through the blending of the  
material force (*ch'i*) they achieve  
harmony.

People hate to be orphaned, the  
lonely ones, and the unworthy.

And yet kings and lords call  
themselves by these names.

Therefore it is often the case that  
things gain by losing and lose by  
gaining.

What others have taught, I teach  
also:

"Violent and fierce people do not  
die a natural death."

I shall make this the father (basis  
or starting point) of my teaching.

(Henricks)

The Way gave birth to the One;  
The One gave birth to the Two;  
The Two gave birth to the Three;  
And the Three gave birth to the  
ten thousand things.

The ten thousand things carry  
*Yin* on their backs and wrap their  
arms around *Yang*.

Through the blending of *ch'i* they  
arrive at a state of harmony.

The things that are hated by the  
whole world

Are to be orphaned, widowed,  
and have no grain.

Yet kings and dukes take these as  
their names.

Thus with all things -- some are  
increased by taking away;

While some are diminished by  
adding on.

Therefore, what other men teach,

I will also consider and then  
teach to others.

Thus, "The strong and violent do  
not come to a natural end."

I will take this as the father of  
my studies.

(Waley)

Tao gave birth to the One;  
the One gave birth successively  
to two things, three things, up to  
ten thousand.

These ten thousand creatures  
cannot turn their back to the shade  
without having the sun on their  
bellies.

and it is on this blending of the  
breaths that their harmony  
depends.

To be orphaned, needy, ill-  
provided is what men most hate;  
yet princes and dukes style  
themselves so.

Truly, things are often increased  
by seeking to diminish them and  
diminished by seeking to increase  
them.

The maxims that others use in  
their teaching I too will use in mine.

Show me a man of violence that  
came to a good end, and I will take  
him for my teacher.

(Lin)

Out of Tao, One is born;  
Out of One, Two;  
Out of Two, Three;  
Out of Three, the created  
universe.

The created universe carries the  
*yin* at its back and the *yang* if  
front:

Through the union of the  
pervading principles it reaches  
harmony.

To be "orphaned," "lonely" and  
"unworthy" is what men hate most.

Yet the kings and dukes call  
themselves by such names.

For sometimes things are  
benefited by being taken away  
from.

And suffer be being added to.  
Others have taught this maxim.

Which I shall teach also:

"The violent man shall die a  
violent death."

This I shall regard as my  
spiritual teacher.

(Cleary)

The Way produces one;  
one produces two,  
two produces three,  
three produces all beings:  
all beings bear yin and embrace  
yang.

with a mellowing energy for  
harmony.

The things people dislike  
are only to be alone, lacking, and  
unworthy;

yet these are what monarchs call  
themselves.

Therefore people may gain from  
loss.

and may lose from gain.

What others teach, I also teach.

The strong cannot master their  
death:

I take this to be the father of  
teachings.

(Feng&English)

The Tao begot one.  
One begot two.  
Two begot three.  
And three begot the ten thousand  
things.

The ten thousand things carry yin  
and embrace yang.

They achieve harmony by  
combining these forces.

Men hate to be "orphaned,"  
"widowed," or "worthless."

But this is how kings and lords  
describe themselves.

For one gains by losing

And loses by gaining.

What others teach, I also teach:  
that is:

"A violent man will die a violent  
death!"

This will be the essence of my  
teaching.

(Wu)--**FORTY-THREE**

The softest of all things  
Overrides the hardest of all  
things.

Only Nothing can enter into no-  
space.

Hence I know the advantages of  
Non-Ado.

Few things under heaven are as  
instructive as the lessons of  
Silence.

Or as beneficial as the fruits of  
Non-Ado.

(Lau)

The most submissive thing in the  
world can ride roughshod over the  
hardest things in the world --  
that which is without substance  
entering that which has no  
crevices.

That is why I know the benefit of  
resorting to no action.

The Teaching that uses no  
words,  
the benefit of resorting to no  
action,

these are beyond understanding  
of all but a very few in the world.

(Chan)

The softest things in the world  
overcome the hardest things in the  
world.

Non-being penetrates that in  
which there is no space.

Through this I know the  
advantage of taking no action.

Few in this world can understand  
teaching without words  
and the advantage of taking no  
action.

(Henricks)

The softest, most pliable thing in  
the world runs roughshod over the  
firmest thing in the world.

That which has no substance gets  
into that which has no space or  
cracks.

I therefore know that there is  
benefit in taking no action.

The wordless teaching, the  
benefit of taking no action --

Few in the world can realize  
these!

(Waley)

What is of all things most  
yielding (water)

Can overwhelm that which is of  
all things most hard (rock).

Being substanceless it can enter  
even where there is no space;

That is how I know the value of  
action that is actionless.

But that there can be teaching  
without words.

Value in action that is actionless.

Few indeed can understand.

(Lin)

The softest substance of the  
world

Goes through the hardest.

That-which-is-without-form  
penetrates that-which-has-no-  
crevice;

Through this I know the benefit  
of taking no action.

The teaching without words

And the benefit of taking no  
action

Are without compare in the  
universe.

(Cleary)

What is softest in the world  
drives what is hardest in the  
world.

Nonbeing enters where there is  
no room:

that is how we know  
noncontrivance enhances.

Unspoken guidance and  
uncontrived enhancement  
are reached by few in the world.

(Feng&English)

The softest thing in the universe  
Overcomes the hardest thing in  
the universe.

That without substance can enter  
where there is no room.

Hence I know the value of non-  
action.

Teaching without words and  
work without doing

Are understood by few.



(Wu)--**FORTY-FOUR**

As for your name and your body,  
which is the dearer?

As for your body and your  
wealth, which is the more prized?

As for gain and loss, which is the  
more painful?

Thus, an excessive love for  
anything will cost you dear in the  
end.

The storing up of too much  
goods will entail a heavy loss.

To know when you have enough  
is to be immune from disgrace.

To know when to stop is to be  
preserved from perils.

Only thus can you endure long.

(Lau)

Your name or your person,  
Which is dearer?

Your person or your goods,  
Which is worth more?

Gain or loss.

Which is a greater bane?

That is why excessive meanness  
Is sure to lead to great expense;  
Too much store

Is sure to end in immense loss.

Know contentment

And you will suffer no disgrace;

Know when to stop

And you will meet no danger.

You can then endure.

(Chan)

Which does one love more, fame  
or one's own life?

Which is more valuable, one's  
own life or wealth?

Which is worse, gain or loss?

Therefore he who has lavish  
desires will spend extravagantly.

He who hoards most will lose  
heavily.

He who is contented suffers no  
disgrace.

He who knows when to stop is  
free from danger.

Therefore he can endure long.

(Henricks)

Fame or health -- which is more  
dear?

Your health or possessions --  
which is worth more?

Gain or loss -- in which is there  
harm?

If your desires are great, you're  
bound to be extravagant;

If you store much away, you're  
bound to lose a great deal.

Therefore, if you know  
contentment, you'll not be  
disgraced.

If you know when to stop, you'll  
suffer no harm.

And in this way you can last a  
very long time.

(Waley)

Fame or one's own self, which matters to one most?

One's own self or things bought, which should count most?

In the getting or the losing, which is worse?

Hence he who grudges expense pays dearest in the end:

He who has hoarded most will suffer the heaviest loss.

Be content with what you have and are, and no one can despoil you:

Who stops in time nothing can harm.

He is forever safe and secure.

(Lin)

Fame or one's own self, which does one love more?

One's own self or material goods, which has more worth?

Loss (of self) or possession (of goods), which is the greater evil?

Therefore: he who loves most spends most.

He who hoards much loses much.

The contented man meets no disgrace:

Who knows when to stop runs into no danger --

He can long endure.

(Cleary)

Which is closer, your name or your body?

Which is more, your body or your possessions?

Which is more destructive, gain or loss?

Extreme fondness means great expense.

and abundant possessions mean a great loss.

If you know when you have enough.

you will not be disgraced.

If you know when to stop, you will not be endangered.

It is possible thereby to live long.

(Feng&English)

Fame or self: which matters more?

Self or wealth: Which is more precious?

Gain or loss: Which is more painful?

He who is attached to things will suffer much.

He who saves will suffer heavy loss.

A contented man is never disappointed.

He who knows when to stop does not find himself in trouble.

He will stay forever safe.

(Wu)--**FORTY-FIVE**

The greatest perfection seems imperfect.  
And yet its use is inexhaustible.  
The greatest fullness seems empty.  
And yet its use is endless.  
The greatest straightness looks like crookedness.  
The greatest skill appears clumsy.  
The greatest eloquence sounds like stammering.  
Restlessness overcomes cold,  
But calm overcomes heat.  
The peaceful and serene  
Is the Norm of the World.

(Lau)

Great perfection seems chipped.  
Yet use will not wear it out;  
Great fullness seems empty,  
Yet use will not drain it;  
Great straightness seems bent;  
Great skill seems awkward;  
Great eloquence seems tongue-tied.  
Restlessness over comes cold;  
stillness overcomes heat.  
Limpid and still,  
One can be a leader in the empire.

(Chan)

What is most perfect seems to be incomplete;  
But its utility is unimpaired.  
What is most full seems to be empty;  
But its usefulness is inexhaustible  
What is most straight seems to be crooked.  
The greatest skill seems to be clumsy.  
The greatest eloquence seems to stutter.  
Hasty movement overcomes cold,  
(But) tranquillity overcomes heat.  
By being greatly tranquil,  
One is qualified to be the ruler of the world.

(Henricks)

Great completion seems incomplete;  
Yet its usefulness is never exhausted.  
Great fullness seems to be empty;  
Yet its usefulness is never used up.  
Great straightness seems to be bent.  
Great skill seems to be clumsy.  
Great eloquence seems to stammer;  
Great surplus seems to be lacking.  
Activity overcomes cold;  
Tranquillity overcomes heat.  
If you're quiet and tranquil you can become the ruler of the world.

(Waley)

What is most perfect seems to  
have something missing;  
Yet its use is unimpaired.  
What is most full seems empty;  
Yet its use will never fail.  
What is most straight seems  
crooked;  
The greatest skill seems like  
clumsiness.  
The greatest eloquence like  
stuttering.  
Movement overcomes cold;  
But staying still overcomes heat.  
So he by his limpid calm  
Puts right everything under  
heaven.

(Lin)

The highest perfection is like  
imperfection.  
And its use is never impaired.  
The greatest abundance seems  
meager.  
And its use will never fail.  
What is most straight appears  
devious;  
The greatest cleverness appears  
like stupidity;  
The greatest eloquence seems  
like stuttering.  
Movement overcomes cold.  
(But) keeping still overcomes  
heat.  
Who is calm and quiet becomes  
the guide for the universe.

(Cleary)

Great completeness seems  
incomplete;  
its use is never exhausted.  
Great fullness seems empty;  
its use is never ended.  
Great directness seems  
restrained.  
great skill seems inept.  
great eloquence seems  
inarticulate.  
Movement overcomes cold,  
stillness overcomes heat.  
Clear stillness is right for the  
world.

(Feng&English)

Great accomplishment seems  
imperfect.  
Yet it does not outlive its  
usefulness.  
Great fullness seems empty.  
Yet it cannot be exhausted.  
Great straightness seems twisted.  
Great intelligence seems stupid.  
Great eloquence seems awkward.  
Movement overcomes cold.  
Stillness overcomes heat.  
Stillness and tranquillity set  
things in order in the universe.

(Wu)--FORTY-SIX

When the world is in possession  
of the Tao,

The galloping horses are led to  
fertilize the fields with their  
droppings.

When the world has become  
Taoless,

War horses breed themselves on  
the suburbs.

There is no calamity like not  
knowing what is enough.

There is no evil like  
covetousness.

Only he who knows what is  
enough will always have enough.

(Lau)

When the way prevails in the  
empire, fleet-footed horses are  
relegated to ploughing the fields;  
when the way does not prevail in  
the empire, war-horses breed on  
the border.

There is no crime greater than  
having too many desires;

There is no disaster greater than  
not being content;

There is no misfortune greater  
than being covetous.

Hence in being content, one will  
always have enough.

(Chan)

When Tao prevails in the world,  
galloping horses are turned back to  
fertilize (the fields with their  
dung).

When Tao does not prevail in the  
world, war horses thrive in the  
suburbs.

There is no calamity greater than  
lavish desires.

There is no greater guilt than  
discontentment.

And there is no greater disaster  
than greed.

He who is contented with  
contentment is always contented.

(Henricks)

When the world has the Way,  
ambling horses are retired to  
fertilize fields.

When the world lacks the Way,  
war horses are reared in the  
suburbs.

Of crimes -- none is greater than  
having things that one desires;

Of disasters -- none is greater  
than not knowing when one has  
enough.

Of defects -- none brings more  
sorrow than the desire to attain,

Therefore, the contentment one  
has when he knows that he has  
enough, is abiding contentment  
indeed.

(Waley)

When there is Tao in the empire  
The galloping steeds are turned  
back to fertilize the ground with  
their droppings.

When there is not Tao in the  
empire

War horses will be reared even  
on the sacred mounds below city  
walls.

No lure is greater than to possess  
what others want.

No disaster greater than not to be  
content with what one has.

No presage of evil greater than  
that men should be wanting to get  
more.

Truly: He who has once known  
the contentment that comes simply  
through being content, will never  
again be otherwise than contented.

(Lin)

When the world lives in accord  
with Tao.

Racing horses are turned back to  
haul refuse carts.

When the world lives not in  
accord with Tao.

Cavalry abounds in the  
countryside.

There is no greater curse than the  
lack of contentment.

No greater sin than the desire for  
possession.

Therefore he who is contented  
with contentment shall always be  
content.

(Cleary)

When the world has the Way,  
running horses are retired to till  
the fields.

When the world lacks the Way,  
war-horses are bred in the  
countryside.

No crime is greater than  
approving of greed;  
no calamity is greater than  
discontent.

no fault is greater than  
possessiveness.

So the satisfaction of  
contentment is always enough.

(Feng&English)

When the Tao is present in the  
universe.

The horses haul manure.

When the Tao is absent from the  
universe.

War horses are bred outside the  
city.

There is no greater sin than  
desire.

No greater curse than discontent.

No greater misfortune than  
wanting something for oneself.

Therefore he who knows that  
enough is enough will always have  
enough.

(Wu)--**FORTY-SEVEN**

Without going out of your door,  
You can know the ways of the  
world.  
Without peeping through your  
window.  
You can see the Way of Heaven.  
The farther you go,  
The less you know.  
Thus, the Sage knows without  
traveling.  
Sees without looking,  
And achieves without Ado.

(Lau) -

Without stirring abroad  
One can know the whole world;  
Without looking out of the  
window  
One can see the way of heaven.  
The further one goes  
The less one knows.  
Therefore the sage knows  
without having to stir,  
Identifies without having to see,  
Accomplishes without having to  
act.

(Chan)

One may know the world without  
going out of doors.  
One may see the Way of Heaven  
without looking through the  
windows.  
The further one goes, the less one  
knows.  
Therefore the sage knows  
without going about,  
Understands without seeing,  
And accomplishes without any  
action.

(Henricks)

No need to leave your door to  
know the whole world;  
No need to peer through your  
windows to know the Way of  
Heaven.  
The farther you go, the less you  
know.  
Therefore the Sage knows  
without going,  
Names without seeing,  
And completes without doing a  
thing.

(Waley)

Without leaving his door  
He knows everything under  
heaven.  
Without looking out of his  
window  
He knows all the ways of heaven.  
For further on travels  
The less one knows.  
Therefore the Sage arrives  
without going.  
Sees all without looking.  
Does nothing, yet achieves  
everything.

(Lin)

Without stepping outside one's  
doors.  
One can know what is happening  
in the world.  
Without looking out of one's  
windows.  
One can see the Tao of Heaven.  
The farther one pursues  
knowledge.  
The less one knows.  
Therefore the Sage knows  
without running about.  
Understands without seeing.  
Accomplishes without doing.

(Cleary)

They know the world  
without even going out the door.  
They see the sky and its pattern  
without even looking out the  
window.  
The further out it goes, the less  
knowledge is;  
therefore sages know without  
going,  
name without seeing,  
complete without striving.

(Feng&English)

Without going outside, you may  
know the whole world.  
Without looking through the  
window, you may see the ways of  
heaven.  
The farther you go, the less you  
know.  
Thus the sage knows without  
traveling;  
He sees without looking;  
He works without doing.



(Wu)--**FORTY-EIGHT**

Learning consists in daily accumulating;

The practice of the Tao consists in daily diminishing.

Keep on diminishing and diminishing.

Until you reach the state of Non-Ado.

No-Ado. and yet nothing is left undone.

To win the world, one must renounce all.

If one still has private ends to serve.

One will never be able to win the world.

(Lau)

In the pursuit of learning one knows more every day;

in the pursuit of the way one does less every day.

One does less and less until one does nothing at all,

and when one does noting at all there is nothing that is undone.

It is always through not meddling that the empire is won.

Should you meddle, then you are not equal to the task of winning the empire.

(Chan)

The pursuit of learning is to increase day after day.

The pursuit of Tao is to decrease day after day.

It is to decrease and further decrease until one reaches the point of taking no action.

No action is undertaken, and yet nothing is left undone.

An empire is often brought to order by having no activity (laissez-faire).

If one (likes to) undertake activity, he is not qualified to govern the empire.

(Henricks)

Those who work at their studies increase day after day;

Those who have heard the Tao decrease day after day.

They decrease and decrease till they get to the point where they do nothing.

They do nothing and yet there's nothing left undone.

When someone wants to take control of the world, he must always be unconcerned with affairs.

For in a case where he's concerned with affairs.

He'll be unworthy, as well, of taking control of the world.

(Waley)

Learning consists in adding to  
one's stock day by day;  
The practice of Tao consists in  
'subtracting day by day.  
Subtracting and yet again  
subtracting  
Till one has reached inactivity.  
But by this very inactivity  
Everything can be activated.'  
Those who of old won the  
adherence of all who live under  
heaven  
All did so by not interfering.  
Had they interfered,  
They would never have won this  
adherence.

(Lin)

The student of knowledge (aims  
at) learning day by day;  
The student of Tao (aims at)  
losing day by day.  
By continual losing  
One reaches doing nothing  
(*laissez-faire*).  
By doing nothing everything is  
done.  
He who conquers the world often  
does so by doing nothing.  
When one is compelled to do  
something,  
The world is already beyond his  
conquering.

(Cleary)

For learning you gain daily;  
for the Way you lose daily.  
Losing and losing,  
this you reach noncontrivance;  
be uncontrived, and nothing is  
not done.  
Taking the world is always done  
by not making anything of it.  
For when something is made of  
it,  
that is not enough to take the  
world.

(Feng&English)

In the pursuit of learning, every  
day something is acquired.  
In the pursuit of Tao, every day  
something is dropped.  
Less and less is done  
Until non-action is achieved.  
When nothing is done, nothing is  
left undone.  
The world is ruled by letting  
things take their course.  
It cannot be ruled by interfering.

(Wu)--FORTY-NINE

The Sage has no interests of his own.

But takes the interests of the people as his own.

He is kind to the kind;

He is also kind to the unkind:

For Virtue is kind.

He is faithful to the faithful;

He is also faithful to the

unfaithful:

For Virtue is faithful.

In the midst of the world, the Sage is shy and self-effacing.

For the sake of the world he keeps his heart in its nebulous state.

All the people strain their ears and eyes:

The Sage only smiles like an amused infant.

(Lau)

The sage has no mind of his own.

He takes as his own the mind of the people.

Those who are good I treat as good.

Those who are not good I also treat as good.

In doing so I gain in goodness.

Those who are of good faith I have faith in.

Those who are lacking in good faith I also have faith in.

In doing so I gain in good faith.

The sage in his attempt to distract the mind of the empire seeks urgently to muddle it.

The people all have something to occupy their eyes and ears, and the sage treats them all like children.

(Chan)

The sage has no fixed (personal) ideas.

He regards the people's ideas as his own.

I treat those who are good with goodness.

And I also treat those who are not good with goodness.

Thus goodness is attained.

I am honest to those who are honest.

And I am also honest to those who are not honest.

Thus honesty is attained.

The sage, in the government of his empire, has no subjective viewpoint.

His mind forms a harmonious whole with that of his people.

They all lend their eyes and ears, and he treats them all as infants.

(Henricks)

The Sage constantly has no set mind;

He takes the mind of the common people as his mind.

Those who are good he regards as good;

Those who are not good he also regards as good.

In this way he attains goodness.

Those who are trustworthy he trusts;

And those who are not trustworthy he also trusts.

In this way he gets their trust.

As for the Sage's presence in the world -- he is one with it.

And with the world he merges his mind.

The common people all fix their eyes and ears on him.

And the Sage treats them all as his children.

(Waley)

The Sage has no heart of his own;  
He uses the heart of the people as his heart.  
Of the good man I approve,  
But of the bad I also approve.  
And thus he gets goodness.  
The truthful man I believe, but the liar I also believe.  
And thus he gets truthfulness.  
The Sage, in his dealings with the world, seems like one dazed with fright;  
For the world's sake he dulls his wits.  
The Hundred Families all the time strain their eyes and ears.  
The Sage all the time sees and hears no more than an infant sees and hears.

(Lin)

The Sage has no decided opinions and feelings.  
But regards the people's opinions and feelings as his own.  
The good ones I declare good;  
The bad ones I also declare good.  
That is the goodness of Virtue.  
The honest ones I believe;  
The liars I also believe;  
That is the faith of Virtue.  
The Sage dwells in the world peacefully, harmoniously.  
The people of the world are brought into a community of heart,  
and the Sage regards them all as his own children.

(Cleary)

Sages have no fixed mind;  
they make the minds of the people their mind;  
they improve the good,  
and also improve those how are not good;  
that virtue is good.  
They make sure of the true,  
and they make sure of the untrue too;  
that virtue is sure.  
The relation of sages to the world is one of concern:  
they cloud their minds for the world;  
all people pour into their ears and eyes,  
and sages render them innocent.

(Feng&English)

The sage has no mind of his own.  
He is aware of the needs of others.  
I am good to people who are good.  
I am also good to people who are not good.  
Because Virtue is goodness.  
I have faith in people who are faithful.  
I also have faith in people who are not faithful.  
Because Virtue is faithful.  
The sage is shy and humble -- to the world he seems confusing.  
Others look to him and listen.  
He behaves like a little child.

(Wu)--FIFTY

When one is out of Life, one is in Death.

The companions of life are thirteen;  
the companions of Death are thirteen;

and, when a living person moves into the Realm of Death, his companions are also thirteen.

How is this?

Because he draws upon the resources of Life too heavily.

It is said that he who knows well how to live meets no tigers or wild buffaloes on his road.

and comes out from the battleground untouched by the weapons war.

For, in him, a buffalo would find no butt for his horns, a tiger nothing to lay claws upon, and a weapon of war no place to admit its point.

How is this?

Because there is no room for Death in him.

(Lau)

When going one way means life and going the other means death, three in ten will be comrades of life.

three in ten will be comrades of death,

and there are those who value life and as a result move into the realm of death, and these number three in ten.

Why is this so?

Because they set too much store by life.

I have heard it said that one who excels in safe-guarding his own life does not meet with rhinoceros or tiger when traveling on land nor is he touched by weapons when charging into an army.

There is nowhere for the rhinoceros to pitch its horn; there is nowhere for the tiger to place its claws; there is nowhere for the weapon to lodge its blade.

Why is this so?

Because for him there is no realm of death.

(Chan)

Man comes into life and goes out to death.

Three out of ten are companions of life.

Three out of ten are companions of death.

And three out of ten in their lives lead from activity to death.

And for what reason?

Because of man's intensive striving after life.

I have heard that one who is a good preserver of his life will not meet tigers or wild buffalos,

And in fighting will not try to escape from weapons of war.

The wild buffalo cannot butt its horn against him,

The tiger cannot fasten its claws in him,

And weapons of war cannot thrust their blades into him.

And for what reason?

Because in him there is no room for death.

(Henricks)

We come into life and go back into death.

The companions of life are thirteen;

The companions of death are thirteen;

And yet people, because they regard life as LIFE, in all of their actions move toward the thirteen that belong to the realm of death.

Now, why is this so?

It's because they regard life as LIFE.

You've no doubt heard of those who are good at holding onto life:

When walking through hills, they don't avoid rhinos and tigers;

When they go into battle, they don't put on armor or shields;

The rhino has no place to probe with its horn;

The tiger finds no place to put its claws.

And weapons find no place to hold their blades.

Now, why is this so?

Because there is no place for death in them.

(Waley)

He who aims at life achieves death.

If the 'companions of life' are thirteen, so likewise are the 'companions of death' thirteen.

How is it that the 'death-spots' in a man's life are also thirteen?

It is because men feed life too grossly.

It is said that he who has a true hold on life,

when he walks on land does not meet tigers or wild buffaloes; in battle he is not touched by weapons of war.

Indeed, a buffalo that attacked him would find nothing for its horn to butt, a tiger would find nothing for its claws to tear, a weapon would find no place for its point to enter in.

And why?

Because such men have no 'death-spot' in them.

(Lin)

Out of life, death enters.

The organs of life are thirteen;

The organs of death are (also) thirteen.

What send man to death in this life are also (these) thirteen.

How is it so?

Because of the intense activity of multiplying life.

It has been said that he who is a good preserver of his life meets no tigers or wild buffaloes on land.

Is not vulnerable to weapons in the field of battle.

The horns of the wild buffalo are powerless against him;

The paws of the tiger are useless against him;

The weapons of the soldier cannot avail against him.

How is it so?

Because he is beyond death.

(Cleary)

Exiting life, we enter death.

The followers of life are three out of ten.

the followers of death are three out of ten;

in the lives of the people, the dying grounds on which they are agitated are also three out of ten.

What is the reason?

Because of the seriousness with which they take life as life.

It has been said that those who maintain life well do not meet rhinos or tigers on land

and do not arm themselves in war.

There is no way for rhinos to gore them;

there is no way for tigers to claw them;

there is no way for weapons to get at them.

Why? Because they have no dying ground.

(Feng&English)

Between birth and death.

Three in ten are followers of life.

Three in ten are followers of death.

And men just passing from birth to death also number three in ten.

Why is this so?

Because they live their lives on the gross level.

He who knows how to live can walk abroad

Without fear of rhinoceros or tiger.

He will not be wounded in battle.

For in him rhinoceroses can find no place to thrust their horn.

Tigers no place to use their claws.

And weapons no place to pierce.

Why is this so?

Because he has no place for death to enter.

(Wu)--FIFTY-ONE

Tao gives them life.  
Virtue nurses them.  
Matter shapes them.  
Environment perfects them.  
Therefore all things without  
exception worship Tao and do  
homage to Virtue.

They have not been commanded  
to worship Tao and do homage to  
Virtue.

But they always do so  
spontaneously.

It is Tao that gives them life:  
It is Virtue that nurses them,  
grows them, fosters them, shelters  
them, comforts them, nourishes  
them, and covers them under her  
wings.

To give life but to claim nothing,  
To do your work but to set no  
store by it,  
To be a leader, not a butcher,  
This is called hidden Virtue.

(Lau)

The way gives life;  
Virtue rears them;  
Things give them shape;  
Circumstances bring them to  
maturity.

Therefore the myriad creatures  
all revere the way and honour  
virtue.

Yet the way is revered and virtue  
is honoured not because this is  
decreed by any authority but  
because it is natural for them to be  
treated so.

Thus the way gives them life and  
rears them;

Brings them up and nurses them;  
Brings them to fruition and  
maturity;

Feeds and shelters them.

It gives them life yet claims no  
possession;

It benefits them yet exacts no  
gratitude;

It is the steward yet exercises no  
authority.

Such is called the mysterious  
virtue.

(Chan)

Tao produces them (the ten  
thousand things).

Virtue fosters them.

Matter gives them physical form.

The circumstances and  
tendencies complete them.

Therefore the ten thousand things  
esteem Tao and honor virtue.

Tao is esteemed and virtue  
honored without anyone's order.

They always come  
spontaneously.

Therefore Tao produces them  
and virtue fosters them.

They rear them and develop  
them.

They give them security and give  
them peace.

They nurture them and protect  
them.

(Tao) produces them but does  
not take possession of them.

It acts, but does not rely on its  
own ability.

It leads them but does not master  
them.

This is called profound and  
secret virtue.

(Henricks)

The Way gives birth to them and  
Virtue nourishes them;

Substance gives them form and  
their unique capacities complete  
them.

Therefore the ten thousand things  
venerate the Way and honor  
Virtue.

As for their veneration of the  
Way and their honoring of Virtue--

No one rewards them for it; it's  
constantly so on its own.

The Way gives birth to them,  
nourishes them, matures them,  
completes them, rests them, rears  
them, supports them, and protects  
them.

It gives birth to them but doesn't  
try to own them;

It acts on their behalf but doesn't  
make them dependent;

It matures them but doesn't rule  
them.

This we call Profound Virtue.

(Waley)

Tao gave them birth;  
The 'power' of Tao reared them.  
Shaped them according to their  
kinds.

Perfected them, giving to each its  
strength.

Therefore of the ten thousand  
things there is not one that does  
not worship Tao and do homage to  
its 'power'.

No mandate ever went forth that  
accorded to Tao the right to be  
worshipped, nor its 'power' the  
right to receive homage.

It was always and of itself so.

Therefore as Tao bore them and  
the 'power' of Tao reared them,  
made them grow, fostered them,  
harboured them, brewed for them,

so you must 'Rear them, but not  
lay claim to them.

Control them, but never lean  
upon them.

Be chief among them, but not  
manage them.

This is called the mysterious  
power.'

(Lin)

Tao gives them birth,  
Teh (virtue) fosters them.  
The material world gives them  
form.

The circumstances of the  
moment complete them.

Therefore all things of the  
universe worship Tao and exalt  
Teh.

Tao is worshipped and Teh  
exalted

Without anyone's order and is so  
of its own accord.

Therefore Tao gives them birth.

Teh fosters them.

Makes them grow, develops  
them.

Gives them a harbor, a place to  
dwell in peace.

Feeds them and shelters them.

It gives them birth and does not  
own them.

Acts (helps) and does not  
appropriate them.

Is superior, and does not control  
them.

-- This is the Mystic Virtue.

(Clary)

The Way gives birth,  
virtue nurtures,  
things form,  
momentum completes.

Therefore all beings honor the  
Way

and value its Virtue.

The honor of the Way  
and the value of Virtue  
are not granted by anyone,  
but are always naturally so.

So the Way gives birth and  
nurtures,

makes grow and develops,  
completes and matures.

builds up and breaks down.

It produces but does not possess;  
it acts without presumption.

It fosters growth without ruling.

This is called hidden Virtue.

(Feng&English)

All things arise from Tao.  
They are nourished by Virtue.  
They are formed from matter.  
They are shaped by environment.

Thus the ten thousand things all  
respect Tao and honor Virtue.

Respect of Tao and honor of  
Virtue are not demanded.

But they are in the nature of  
things.

Therefore all things arise from  
Tao.

By Virtue they are nourished.

Developed, cared for.

Sheltered, comforted.

Grown, and protected.

Creating without claiming.

Doing without taking credit.

Guiding without interfering.

This is Primal Virtue.



(Wu)--FIFTY-TWO

All-under-Heaven have a  
common Beginning.

The Beginning is the Mother of  
the world.

Having known the Mother.

We may proceed to know her  
children.

Having known the children,

We should go back and hold on  
to the Mother.

In so doing, you will incur no  
risk

Even though your body be  
annihilated.

Block all the passages!

Shut all the doors!

And to the end of your days you  
will not be worn out.

Open the passages!

Multiply your activities!

And to the end of your days you  
will remain helpless.

To see the small is to have  
insight.

To hold on to weakness is to be  
strong.

Use the lights, but return to your  
insight.

Do not bring calamities upon  
yourself.

This is the way of cultivating the  
Changeless.

(Lau)

The world had a beginning  
And this beginning could be the  
mother of the world.

When you know the mother

Go on to know the child.

Go back to holding fast to the  
mother,

And to the end of your days you  
will not meet with danger.

Block the openings.

Shut the doors,

And all your life you will not run  
dry.

Unblock the openings,

Add to your troubles,

And to the end of your days you  
will be beyond salvation.

To see the small is called  
discernment;

To hold fast to the submissive is  
called strength.

Use the light

But give up the discernment.

Bring not misfortune upon  
yourself.

This is known as following the  
constant.

(Chan)

There was a beginning of the  
universe

Which may be called the Mother  
of the Universe.

He who has found the mother  
(Tao)

And thereby understands her  
sons (things)

And having understood her sons,

Still keeps to its mother,

Will be free from danger

throughout his lifetime.

Close the mouth.

Shut the doors (of cunning and  
desire).

And to the end of life there will  
be (peace) without toil.

Open the mouth.

Meddle with affairs,

And to the end of life there will  
be no salvation.

Seeing what is small is called  
enlightenment.

Keeping to weakness is called  
strength.

Use the light.

Revert to enlightenment,

And thereby avoid danger to  
one's life --

This is called practicing the  
eternal.

(Henricks)

The world had a beginning,  
Which can be considered the  
mother of the world.

Having attained the mother, in  
order to understand her children.

If you return and hold on to the  
mother, till the end of your life  
you'll suffer no harm.

Block up the holes;

Close the doors;

And till the end of your life you'll  
not labor.

Open the holes;

Meddle in affairs;

And till the end of your life you'll  
not be saved.

To perceive the small is called  
"discernment."

To hold on to the pliant is called  
"strength."

If you use the rays to return to  
the bright light,

You'll not abandon your life to  
peril.

This is called Following the  
Constant.

(Waley)

That which was the beginning of  
all things under heaven

We may speak of as the 'mother'  
of all things.

He who apprehends the mother  
Thereby knows the sons.

And he who has known the sons  
Will hold all the tighter to the  
mother.

And to the end of his days suffer  
no harm:

'Block the passages, shut the  
doors,

And till the end your strength  
shall not fail.

Open the passages, increase your  
doings.

And till your last day no help  
shall come to you.'

As good sight means seeing what  
is very small

So strength means holding on to  
what is weak.

He who having used the outer-  
light can return to the inner-light  
Is thereby preserved from all  
harm.

This is called resorting to the  
always-so.

(Lin)

There was a beginning of the  
universe

Which may be regarded as the  
Mother of the Universe.

Form the Mother, we may know  
her sons.

After knowing the sons, keep to  
the Mother.

Thus one's whole life may be  
preserved from harm.

Stop its apertures.

Close its doors.

And one's whole life is without  
toil.

Open its apertures.

Be busy about its affairs.

And one's whole life is beyond  
redemption.

He who can see the small is  
clear-sighted;

He who stays by gentility is  
strong.

Use the light,

And return to clear-sightedness --

Thus cause not yourself later  
distress.

-- This is to steal the Absolute.

(Cleary)

The world has a beginning  
that is the mother of the world.

Once you've found the mother,  
thereby you know the child.

Once you know the child,  
you return to keep the mother,

not perishing though the body  
die.

Close your eyes, shut your doors,  
and you do not toil all your life.

Open your eyes, carry out your  
affairs,

and you are not saved all your  
life.

Seeing the small is called clarity;  
keeping flexible is called  
strength.

Using the shining radiance,  
you return again to the light,  
not leaving anything to harm  
yourself.

This is called entering the  
eternal.

(Feng&English)

The beginning of the universe  
Is the mother of all things.

Knowing the mother, one also  
knows the sons.

Knowing the sons, yet remaining  
in touch with the mother.

Brings freedom from the fear of  
death.

Keep your mouth shut.

Guard the senses.

And life is ever full.

Open your mouth.

Always be busy.

And life is beyond hope.

Seeing the small is insight;

Yielding to force is strength.

Using the outer light, return to  
insight.

And in this way be saved from  
harm.

This is learning constancy.

(Wu)--FIFTY-THREE

If only I had the tiniest grain of wisdom.

I should walk in the Great Way,

And my only fear would be to stray from it.

The Great Way is very smooth and straight;

And yet the people prefer devious paths.

The court is very clean and well garnished.

But the fields are very weedy and wild.

And the granaries are very empty!

They wear gorgeous clothes,

They carry sharp swords.

They surfeit themselves with food and drink.

The possess more riches than they can use!

They are the heralds of

brigandage!

As for Tao, what do they know about it?

(Lau)

Were I possessed of the least knowledge,

I would, when walking on the great way,

fear only paths that lead astray.

The great way is easy,

yet people prefer by-paths.

The court is corrupt,

The fields are overgrown with weeds,

The granaries are empty;

Yet there are those dressed in fineries,

With swords at their sides,

Filled with food and drink,

And possessed of too much wealth.

This is known as taking the lead in robbery.

Far indeed is this from the way.

(Chan)

If I had but little knowledge

I should, in walking on a broad way,

Fear getting off the road.

Broad ways are extremely even.

But people are fond of by-paths.

The courts are exceedingly splendid,

While the fields are exceedingly weedy,

And the granaries are exceedingly empty.

Elegant clothes are worn,

Sharp weapons are carried,

Foods and drinks are enjoyed beyond limit.

And wealth and treasures are accumulated in excess.

This is robbery and

extravagance.

This is indeed not Tao (the way).

(Henricks)

Were I to have the least bit of knowledge,

in walking on a Great Road,

it's only going astray that I would fear.

The Great Way is very level;

But people greatly delight in tortuous paths.

The courts are swept very clean;

While the fields are full of

weeds;

And the granaries are all empty.

Their clothing -- richly

embroidered and colored;

While at their wastes they carry

sharp swords.

They gorge themselves on food,

and possessions and goods they

have plenty.

This is called thievery!

And thievery certainly isn't the

Way!

(Waley)

He who has the least scrap of  
sense.  
once he has got started on the  
great highway  
has nothing to fear so long as he  
avoids turnings.  
For great highways are safe and  
easy.  
But men love by-paths.  
So long as the Court is in order  
They are content to let their  
fields run to weed  
And their granaries stand empty.  
They wear patterns and  
embroideries,  
Carry sharp swords.  
glut themselves with drink and  
food.  
have more possessions than they  
can use.  
These are the riotous ways of  
brigandage;  
they are not the Highway.

(Lin)

If I were possessed of Austere  
Knowledge.  
Walking on the Main Path (Tao).  
I would avoid the by-paths.  
The Main Path is easy to walk  
on.  
Yet people love the small by-  
paths.  
The (official) courts are spic and  
span.  
(While) the fields go untilled.  
And the granaries are very low.  
(Yet) clad in embroidered gowns.  
And carrying fine swords.  
Surfeit with good food and  
drinks.  
(They are) splitting with wealth  
and possessions.  
-- This is to lead the world  
toward brigandage.  
Is it not the corruption of Tao?

(Cleary)

Causing one flashes of  
knowledge  
to travel the Great Way,  
only its application demands  
care.  
The Great Way is quite even.  
yet people prefer byways.  
When courts are extremely  
fastidious,  
the fields are seriously neglected,  
and the granaries are very empty;  
they wear colorful clothing  
and carry sharp swords,  
eat and drink to their fill  
and possess more than enough.  
This is called the vanity of  
thieves;  
it is not the Way.

(Feng&English)

If I have even just a little sense.  
I will walk on the main road and  
my only fear will be of straying  
from it.  
Keeping to the main road is easy.  
But people love to be  
sidetracked.  
When the court is arrayed in  
splendor,  
The fields are full of weeds.  
And the granaries are bare.  
Some wear gorgeous clothes.  
Carry sharp swords.  
And indulge themselves with  
food and drink:  
They have more possessions than  
they can use.  
They are robber barons.  
This is certainly not the way of  
Tao.

(Wu)--FIFTY-FOUR

What is well planted cannot be uprooted.

What is well embraced cannot slip away.

Your descendants will carry on the ancestral sacrifice for generations without end.

Cultivate Virtue in your own person.

And it becomes a genuine part of you.

Cultivate it in the family,

And it will abide.

Cultivate it in the community,

And it will live and grow.

Cultivate it in the state,

And it will flourish abundantly.

Cultivate it in the world,

And it will become universal.

Hence, a person must be judged as person;

A family as family;

A community as community;

A state as state;

The world as world.

How do I know about the world?

By what is within me.

(Lau)

What is firmly rooted cannot be pulled out;

What is tightly held in the arms will not slip loose;

Through this the offering of sacrifice by descendants will never come to an end.

Cultivate it in your person

And its virtue will be genuine;

Cultivate it in the family

And its virtue will be more than sufficient;

Cultivate it in the hamlet

And its virtue will endure;

Cultivate it in the state

And its virtue will abound;

Cultivate it in the empire

And its virtue will be pervasive.

Hence look at the person through the person;

look at the family through the family;

look at the hamlet through the hamlet;

look at the state through the state;

look at the empire through the empire.

How do I know that the empire is like that?

By means of this.

(Chan)

He who is well established (in Tao) cannot be pulled away.

He who has a firm grasp (of Tao) cannot be separated from it.

Thus from generation to generation his ancestral sacrifice will never be suspended.

When one cultivates virtue in his person, it becomes genuine virtue.

When one cultivates virtue in his family, it becomes overflowing virtue.

When one cultivates virtue in his community, it becomes lasting virtue.

When one cultivates virtue in his country, it becomes abundant virtue.

When one cultivates virtue in the world, it becomes universal.

Therefore the person should be viewed as a person.

The family should be viewed as a family.

The community should be viewed as a community.

The country should be viewed as a country.

And the world should be viewed as the world.

How do I know this to be the case in the world?

Through this (from the cultivation of virtue in the person to that in the world).

(Henricks)

What is firmly set up can't be pulled down;

What is firmly embraced cannot slip free.

And your sons and grandsons, as a result, will sacrifice without end.

When you cultivate it in your person, your virtue will then be genuine;

When you cultivate it in your family, your virtue will then overflow;

When you cultivate it in your village, your virtue will then be long lasting;

When you cultivate it in your state, your virtue will then be abundant;

And when you cultivate it throughout the world, your virtue will then be widespread.

Use the individual to examine the individual;

Use the family to examine the family;

Use the village to examine the village;

Use the state to examine the state;

And use the world to examine the world;

How do I know that the world is so?

By this.

(Waley)

What Tao plants cannot be plucked.

What Tao clasps. cannot slip.

By its virtue alone can one generation after another carry on the ancestral sacrifice.

Apply it to yourself and by its power you will be freed from dross.

Apply it to your household and your household shall thereby have abundance.

Apply it to the village. and the village will be made secure.

Apply it to the kingdom. and the kingdom shall thereby be made to flourish.

Apply it to an empire. and the empire shall thereby be extended.

Therefore just as through oneself one may contemplate Oneself,

So through the household one may contemplate the Household,

And through the village. one may contemplate the Village,

And through the kingdom. one may contemplate the Kingdom,

And through the empire, one may contemplate the Empire.

How do I know that the empire is so?

By this (n. what is inside me).

(Lin)

Who is firmly established is not easily shaken.

Who has a firm grasp does not easily let go.

From generation to generation his ancestral sacrifices shall be continued without fail.

Cultivated in the individual,

Virtue will become genuine;  
Cultivated in the family, Virtue will become abundant;

Cultivated in the village, Virtue will multiply;

Cultivated in the state. Virtue will prosper;

Cultivated in the world. Virtue will become universal.

Therefore:

According to (the virtue of ) the individual, judge the individual;

According to (the virtue of) the family, judge the family;

According to (the virtue of) the village, judge the village;

According to (the virtue of) the state, judge the state;

According to (the virtue of) the world, judge the world.

How do I know the world is so.

By this.

(Cleary)

Good construction does not fall down.

a good embrace does not let go; their heirs honor them

unceasingly.

Cultivate it in yourself. and that virtue is real;

cultivate it in the home, and that virtue is abundant;

cultivate it in the locality, and that virtue lasts;

cultivate it in the nation, and that virtue is rich;

cultivate it in the world, and that virtue is universal.

So observe yourself by yourself, observe the home by the home,

observe the locality by the locality,

observe the nation by the nation, observe the world by the world.

How do I know the world is as it is?

By this:

(Feng&English)

What is firmly established cannot be uprooted.

What is firmly grasped cannot slip away.

It will be honored from generation to generation.

Cultivate Virtue in yourself.

And Virtue will be real.

Cultivate it in the family.

And Virtue will abound.

Cultivate it in the village.

And Virtue will grow.

Cultivate it in the nation.

And Virtue will abundant.

Cultivate it in the universe.

And Virtue will be everywhere. Therefore look at the body as

body;

Look at the family as family;

Look at the village as village;

Look at the nation as nation;

Look at the universe as universe.

How do I know the universe is

like this?

By looking!

(Wu)--FIFTY-FIVE

One who is steeped in Virtue is  
akin to the new-born babe.

Wasps and poisonous serpents  
do not sting it,

Nor fierce beasts seize it.

Not birds of prey maul it.

Its bones are tender, its sinews  
soft.

But its grip is firm.

It has not known the union of  
male and female,

Growing in its wholeness, and  
keeping its vitality in its perfect  
integrity.

It howls and screams all day long  
without getting hoarse,

Because it embodies perfect  
harmony.

To know harmony is to know the  
Changeless.

To know the Changeless is to  
have insight.

To hasten the growth of life is  
ominous.

To control the breath by the will  
is to overstrain it.

To be overgrown is to decay.

All this is against Tao.

And whatever is against Tao  
soon ceases to be.

(Lau)

One who possesses virtue in  
abundance is comparable to a new  
born babe;

Poisonous insects will not sting  
it;

Ferocious animals will not  
pounce in it;

Predatory birds will not swoop  
down on it.

Its bones are weak and its sinews  
supple yet its hold is firm.

It does not know of the union of  
male and female yet its male  
member will stir:

This is because its virility is at  
its height.

It howls all day yet does not  
become hoarse:

This is because its harmony is at  
its height.

To know harmony is called the  
constant;

To know the constant is called  
discernment.

To try to add to one's vitality is  
called ill-omened;

For the mind to egg on the breath  
is called violent.

A creature in its prime doing  
harm to the old

Is know as going against the  
way.

That which goes against the way  
will come to an early end.

(Chan)

He who possesses virtue in  
abundance

May be compared to an infant.

Poisonous insects will not sting  
him.

Fierce beasts will not seize him.

Birds of prey will not strike him.

His bones are weak, his sinews  
tender, but his grip is firm.

He does not yet know the union  
of male and female,

But his organ is aroused.

This means that his essence is at  
its height.

He may cry all day without  
becoming hoarse;

This means that his (natural)  
harmony is perfect.

To know harmony means to be in  
accord with the eternal.

To be in accord with the eternal  
means to be enlightened.

To force the growth of life means  
ill omen.

For the mind to employ the vital  
force without restraint means  
violence.

After things reach their prime,  
they begin to grow old.

Which means being contrary to  
Tao.

Whatever is contrary to Tao will  
soon perish.

(Henricks)

One who embrace the fullness of  
Virtue,

Can be compared to a newborn  
babe.

Wasps and scorpions, snakes and  
vipers do not sting him;

Birds of prey and fierce beasts  
do not seize him;

His bones and muscles are weak  
and pliant, yet his grasp is firm;

He does not yet know the  
meeting of male and female,

yet his organ is aroused --

This is because his essence is at  
its height.

He can scream all day, yet he  
won't become hoarse --

This is because his harmony is at  
its height.

To know harmony is called "the  
constant";

To know the constant is called  
"being wise";

To add on to life is called a "bad  
omen";

For the mind to control the  
breath -- that's called 'forcing  
things.'

When things reach their prime,  
they get old;

This is called "not the Way."

What is not the Way will come to  
an early end.

(Waley)

The impunity of things fraught  
with the 'power'

May be likened to that of an  
infant.

Poisonous insects do not sting it.  
Nor fierce beasts seize it.

Nor clawing birds maul it.  
Its bones are soft, its sinews  
weak; but its grip is strong.

Not yet to have known the union  
of male and female, but to be  
completely formed.

Means that the vital force is at its  
height;

To be able to scream all day  
without getting hoarse

Means that harmony is at its  
perfection.

To understand such harmony is  
to understand the always-so.

To understand the always-so is  
to be illumined.

But to fill life to the brim is to  
invite omens.

If the heart makes calls upon the  
life-breath, rigidity follows.

Whatever has a time of vigour  
also has a time of decay.

Such things are against Tao.

And whatever is against Tao is  
soon destroyed.

(Lin)

Who is rich in virtue

Is like a child.

No poisonous insects sting him.

No wild beasts attack him.

And no birds of prey pounce  
upon him.

His bones are soft, his sinews  
tender, yet his grip is strong.

Not knowing the union of male  
and female, yet his organs are  
complete.

Which means his vigor is  
unspoiled.

Crying the whole day, yet his  
voice never runs hoarse.

Which means his (natural)  
harmony is perfect.

To know harmony is to be in  
accord with the eternal.

(And) to know eternity is called  
discerning.

(But) to improve upon life is  
called ill-omen;

To let go the emotions through  
impulse is called assertiveness.

(For) things age after reaching  
their prime;

That (assertiveness) would be  
against Tao.

And he who is against Tao  
perishes young.

(Cleary)

The richness of subliminal virtue  
is comparable to an infant:  
poisonous creatures do not sting  
it.

wild beasts do not claw it,  
predatory birds do not grab it.  
Its tendons are flexible,  
yet its grip is firm.

Even while it knows not the  
mating of male and female,

its genitals get aroused;  
this is the epitome of vitality.

It can cry all day without  
choking or getting hoarse;  
this is the epitome of harmony.

Knowing harmony is called  
constancy,  
knowing constancy is called  
clarity;

enhancing life is called  
propitious,  
the mind mastering energy is  
called strong.

When beings climax in power,  
they wane;

this is called being unguided.  
The unguided die early.

(Feng&English)

He who is filled with Virtue is  
like a newborn child.

Wasps and serpents will not sting  
him;

He will not be attacked by birds  
of prey.

His bones are soft, his muscles  
weak.

But his grip is firm.

He has not experienced the union  
of man and woman.

but is whole.

His manhood is strong.

He screams all day without  
becoming hoarse.

This is perfect harmony.

Knowing harmony is constancy.

Knowing constancy is  
enlightenment.

It is not wise to rush about.

Controlling the breath causes  
strain.

If too much energy is used,  
exhaustion follows.

This is not the way of Tao.

Whatever is contrary to Tao will  
not last long.



(Wu)--FIFTY-SIX

He who knows does not speak.  
He who speaks does not know.  
Block all the passages!  
Shut all the doors!  
Blunt all edges!  
Untie all tangles!  
Harmonize all lights!  
Unite the world into one whole!  
This is called the Mystical  
Whole,  
Which you cannot court after nor  
shun,  
Benefit nor harm, honour nor  
humble.  
Therefore, it is the Highest of the  
world.

(Lau)

One who knows does not speak;  
one who speaks does not know.  
Block the openings;  
Shut the doors.  
Blunt the sharpness;  
Untangle the knots;  
Soften the glare;  
Let your wheels move only along  
old ruts.  
This is known as mysterious  
sameness.  
Hence you cannot get close to it,  
nor can you keep it at arm's length;  
you cannot bestow benefit on it,  
nor can you do it harm;  
you cannot ennoble it, nor can  
you debase it.  
Therefore it is valued by the  
empire.

(Chan)

He who knows does not speak.  
He who speaks does not know.  
Close the mouth.  
Shut the doors (of cunning  
desires).  
Blunt the sharpness.  
Untie the tangles.  
Soften the light.  
Become one with the dusty  
world.  
This is called profound  
identification.  
Therefore it is impossible either  
to be intimate and close to him or  
to be distant and indifferent to him.  
It is impossible either to benefit  
him or to harm him,  
It is impossible either to honor  
him or to disgrace him.  
For this reason he is honored by  
the world.

(Henricks)

Those who know don't talk about  
it;  
those who talk don't know it.  
He blocks up his holes.  
Closes his doors.  
Softens the glare,  
Settles the dust,  
Files down the sharp edges.  
And untied the tangles.  
This is called Profound Union.  
Therefore, there is no way to get  
intimate with him,  
But there is also no way to shun  
him.  
There is no way to benefit him,  
But there is also no way to harm  
him.  
There is no way to ennoble him,  
But there is also no way to  
debase him.  
For this very reason he's the  
noblest thing in the world.

(Waley)

Those who know do not speak;  
Those who speak do not know.  
Block the passages.  
Shut the doors.  
Let all sharpness be blunted.  
All tangles untied.  
All glare tempered.  
All dust smoothed.  
This is called the mysterious  
leveling.  
He who has achieved it cannot  
either be drawn into friendship or  
repelled.  
Cannot be benefited, cannot be  
harmd.  
Cannot either be raised or  
humbled.  
And for that very reason is  
highest of all creatures under  
heaven.

(Lin)

He who knows does not speak;  
He who speaks does not know.  
Fill up its apertures.  
Close its doors.  
Dull its edges.  
Untie its tangles.  
Soften its light.  
Submerge its turmoil.  
-- This is the Mystic Unity.  
Then love and hatred cannot  
touch him.  
Profit and loss cannot reach him.  
Honor and disgrace cannot affect  
him.  
Therefore is he always the  
honored one of the world.

(Cleary)

Those who know do not say;  
those who say do not know.  
Close the senses.  
shut the doors;  
blunt the sharpness.  
resolve the complications;  
harmonize the light.  
assimilate to the world.  
This is called mysterious  
sameness.  
It cannot be made familiar.  
yet cannot be estranged;  
it cannot be profited,  
yet cannot be harmed;  
it cannot be valued,  
yet cannot be demeaned.  
Therefore it is precious for the  
world.

(Feng&English)

Those who know do not talk.  
Those who talk do not know.  
Keep your mouth closed.  
Guard your senses.  
Temper your sharpness.  
Mask your brightness.  
Be at one with the dust of the  
earth.  
This is primal union.  
He who has achieved this state  
Is unconcerned with friends and  
enemies.  
With good and harm, with honor  
and disgrace.  
This therefore is the highest state  
of man.

(Wu)--FIFTY-SEVEN

You govern a kingdom by normal rules;

You fight a war by exceptional moves;

But you win the world by letting alone.

How do I know that this is so?

By what is within me!

The more taboos and inhibitions there are in the world,

The poorer the people become.

The sharper the weapons the people possess,

The greater confusion reigns in the realm.

The more clever and crafty the men.

The oftener strange things happen.

The more articulate the laws and ordinances.

The more robbers and thieves arise.

Therefore, the Sage says:

I do not make a fuss, and the people transform themselves.

I love quietude, and the people settle down in their regular grooves.

I do not engage myself in anything, and the people grow rich.

I have no desires, and the people return to Simplicity.

(Lau)

Govern the state by being straightforward;

wage war by being crafty; but win the empire by not being meddlesome.

How do I know that it is like that?

By means of this.

The more taboos there are in the empire

The poorer the people;

The more sharpened tools the people have

The more benighted the state;

The more skills the people have

The further novelties multiply;

The better known the laws and edicts

The more thieves and robbers there are.

Hence the sage says,

I take no action and the people are transformed of themselves;

I prefer stillness and the people are rectified of themselves;

I am not meddlesome and the people prosper of themselves;

I am free from desire and the people of themselves become simple like the uncarved block.

(Chan)

Govern the state with correctness.

Operate the army with surprise tactics.

Administer the empire by engaging in no activity.

How do I know that this should be so?

Through this:

The more taboos and prohibitions there are in the world,

The poorer the people will be.

The more sharp weapons the people have.

The more troubled the state will be.

The more cunning and skill man possesses.

The more vicious things will appear.

The more laws and orders are made prominent,

The more thieves and robbers there will be.

Therefore the sage says:

I take no action and the people of themselves are transformed.

I love tranquillity and the people of themselves become correct.

I engage in no activity and the people of themselves become simple.

(Henricks)

Use the right and correct to order the state;

Use surprise tactics when you use troops;

Use unconcern with affairs to take control of the world.

How do I know this is so?

Well, the more taboos and prohibitions there are in the world, the poorer the people will be;

The more sharp weapons the people possess, the more muddled the states will be;

The more knowledge and skill people have, the more novel things will appear;

The more legal matters are made prominent, the more robbers and thieves there will be.

Therefore, the words of the Sage say:

I do nothing, and the people of themselves are transformed;

I love tranquillity, and the people of themselves are upright;

I'm unconcerned with affairs, and the people of themselves become rich;

I desire not to desire, and the people of themselves are genuine and simple, like uncarved wood.

(Waley)

'Kingdoms can only be governed  
if rules are kept;

Battles can only be won if rules  
are broken.'

But adherence of all under  
heaven can only be won by letting-  
alone.

How do I know that it is so?

By this.

The more prohibitions there are,  
the more ritual avoidances.

The poorer the people will be.  
The more 'sharp weapons' there  
are.

The more benighted will the  
whole land grow.

The more cunning craftsmen  
there are.

The more pernicious  
contrivances will be invented.

The more laws are promulgated.

The more thieves and bandits  
there will be.

Therefore a sage has said:

So long as I 'do nothing' the  
people will of themselves be  
transformed.

So long as I love quietude, the  
people will of themselves go  
straight.

So long as I act only by  
inactivity the people will of  
themselves become prosperous.

So long as I have no wants the  
people will of themselves return to  
the 'state of the Uncarved Block'.

(Lin)

Rule a kingdom by the Normal.

Fight a battle by (abnormal)  
tactics of surprise.

Win the world by doing nothing.

How do I know it is so?

Through this:

The more prohibitions there are,  
the poorer the people become.  
The more sharp weapons there  
are.

The more prevailing chaos there  
is in the state.

The more skills of technique,  
The more cunning things are  
produced.

The greater the number of  
statutes.

The greater the number of  
thieves and brigands.

Therefore the Sage says:

I do nothing and the people are  
reformed of themselves.

I love quietude and the people are  
righteous of themselves.

I deal in no business and the  
people grow rich by themselves.

I have no desires and the people  
are simple and honest by  
themselves.

(Cleary)

Use straightforwardness for civil  
government.

use surprise for military  
operations;

use noninvolvement to take the  
world.

How do I know this?

The more taboos there are in the  
world,

the poorer the populace is;  
the more crafts the people have,  
the more exotic things are  
produced;

the more laws are promulgated,  
the greater the number of thieves.

Therefore the sage says.

I contrive nothing,  
and the people are naturally  
civilized;

I am fond of tranquillity,  
and the people are naturally  
upright.

I have nothing to do,  
and the people are naturally  
enriched;

I have no desire,  
and the people are naturally  
simple.

(Feng&English)

Rule a nation with justice.

Wage a war with surprise moves.

Become master of the universe  
without striving.

How do I know this is so?

Because of this!

The more laws and restrictions  
there are,

The poorer people become.

The sharper men's weapons.

The more trouble in the land.

The more ingenious and clever  
men are.

The more strange things happen.

The more rules and regulations.

The more thieves and robbers.

Therefore the sage says:

I take no action and people are  
reformed.

I enjoy peace and people become  
honest.

I do nothing and people become  
rich.

I have no desires and people  
return to the good and simple life.

(Wu)--FIFTY-EIGHT

Where the ruler is mum, mum,  
The people are simple and  
happy.

Where the ruler is sharp, sharp,  
The people are wily and  
discontented.

Bad fortune is what good fortune  
leans on,

Good fortune is what bad fortune  
hides in.

Who knows the ultimate end of  
the process?

Is there no norm of right?

Yet what is normal soon becomes  
abnormal.

And what is auspicious soon  
turns ominous.

Long indeed have the people  
been in a quandary.

Therefore, the Sage squares  
without cutting,

carves without disfiguring,  
straightens without straining,  
enlightens without dazzling.

(Lau)

When the government is muddled  
The people are simple;  
When the government is alert  
The people are cunning.  
It is on disaster that good fortune  
perches;

It is beneath good fortune that  
disaster crouches.

Who knows the limit?  
Does not the straightforward  
exist?

The straightforward changes  
again into the crafty,  
and the good changes again into  
the monstrous.

Indeed, it is long since the people  
were perplexed.

Therefore the sage is square-  
edged but does not scrape,

Has corners but does not jab,  
Extends himself but not at the

expense of others.

Shines but does not dazzle.

(Chan)

When the government is non-  
discriminative and dull,

The people are contented and  
generous.

When the government is  
searching and discriminative,

The people are disappointed and  
contentious.

Calamity is that upon which  
happiness depends;

Happiness is that in which  
calamity is latent.

Who knows when the limit will  
be reached?

Is there no correctness (used to  
govern the world)?

The correct again becomes the  
perverse

And the good will again become  
evil.

The people have been deluded for  
a long time.

Therefore the sage is as pointed  
as a square but does not pierce.

He is as acute as a knife but does  
not cut.

He is as straight as an unbent  
line but does not extend.

He is as bright as light but does  
not dazzle.

(Henricks)

When the government is muddles  
and confused,

The people are genuine and  
sincere.

When the government is  
discriminate and clear,

The state is crafty and cunning.

Disaster is that on which good  
fortune depends.

Good fortune is that in which  
disaster's concealed.

Who knows where it will end?

For there is no fixed "correct."

The "correct" turns into the  
"deviant";

And "good" turns into "evil."

People's state of confusion

Has certainly existed for a long  
time.

Therefore be square but don't  
cut;

Be sharp but don't stab;

Be straightforward but not  
unrestrained;

Be bright but don't dazzle.

(Waley)

When the ruler looks depressed  
the people will be happy and  
satisfied;

When the ruler looks lively and  
self-assured the people will be  
carping and discontented.

'It is upon bad fortune that good  
fortune leans, upon good fortune  
that bad fortune rests.'

But few know it, there is a bourn  
where there is neither right nor  
wrong;

In a realm where every straight is  
doubled by a crooked.

and every good by an ill,  
surely mankind has gone long  
enough astray?

Therefore the Sage

Squares without cutting,  
Shapes the corners without  
lopping.

Straightens without stretching,  
Gives forth light without shining.

(Lin)

When the government is lazy and  
dull.

Its people are unspoiled;

When the government is efficient  
and smart.

Its people are discontented.

Disaster is the avenue of fortune.

(And) fortune is the concealment  
for disaster.

Who would be able to know its  
ultimate results?

(As it is,) there would never be  
the normal.

But the normal would  
(immediately) revert to the  
deceitful.

And the good revert to the  
sinister.

Thus long has mankind gone  
astray!

Therefore the Sage is square (has  
firm principles), but not cutting  
(sharp-cornered),

Has integrity but does not hurt  
(others),

Is straight, but not high-handed,  
Bright, but not dazzling.

(Cleary)

When the government is  
unobtrusive,

the people are pure.

When the government is  
invasive,

the people are wanting.

Calamity is what fortune depends  
upon;

fortune is what calamity  
subdues.

Who knows how it will all end?

Is there no right and wrong?

The orthodox also becomes  
unorthodox.

the good also becomes ill;

people's confusion

is indeed long-standing.

Therefore sages are upright  
without causing injury,

honest without hurting,

direct but not tactless.

illuminated but not flashy.

(Feng&English)

When the country is ruled with a  
light hand

The people are simple.

When the country is ruled with  
severity,

The people are cunning.

Happiness is rooted in misery.

Misery lurks beneath happiness.

Who knows what the future  
holds?

There is no honesty.

Honesty becomes dishonest.

Goodness becomes witchcraft.

Man's bewilderment lasts for a  
long time.

Therefore the sage is sharp but  
not cunning,

Pointed by not piercing,

Straightforward but not  
unrestrained.

Brilliant but not blinding.

(Wu)--FIFTY-NINE

In governing a people and in serving Heaven.

There is nothing like frugality. To be frugal is to return before straying.

To return before straying is to have a double reserve of Virtue.

To have a double reserve of Virtue is to overcome everything.

To overcome everything is to reach an invisible height.

Only he who has reached an invisible height can have a kingdom.

Only he who has got the Mother of a kingdom can last long.

This is the way to be deep-rooted and firm-planted in the Tao.

The secret of long life and lasting vision.

(Lau)

In ruling the people and in serving heaven it is best for a ruler to be sparing.

It is because he is sparing that he may be said to follow the way from the start;

Following the way from the start he may be said to accumulate an abundance of virtue;

Accumulating an abundance of virtue there is nothing he cannot overcome;

When there is nothing he cannot overcome, no one knows his limit;

When no one knows his limit

He can possess a state;

When he possesses the mother of a state

He can then endure.

This is called the way of deep roots and firm stems by which one lives to see many days.

(Chan)

To rule people and to serve Heaven there is nothing better than to be frugal.

Only by being frugal can one recover quickly.

To recover quickly means to accumulate virtue heavily.

By the heavy accumulation of virtue one can overcome everything.

If one can overcome everything, then he will acquire a capacity the limit of which is beyond anyone's knowledge.

When his capacity is beyond anyone's knowledge, he is fit to rule a state.

He who possess the Mother (Tao) of the state will last long.

This means that the roots are deep and the stalks are firm, which is the way of long life and everlasting existence.

(Henricks)

For ordering humanity and serving Heaven, nothing's so good as being sparing.

For only if you are sparing can you, therefore, early submit to the Way.

Early submission -- this is called to repeatedly accumulate Virtue.

If you repeatedly accumulate Virtue, then there is nothing you can't overcome.

When there is nothing you can't overcome, no one knows where it will end.

When no one knows where it will end, you can possess the state.

And when you possess the mother of the state, you can last a very long time.

This is called having deep roots and a firm base.

It's the Way of long life and long-lasting vision.

(Waley)

You cannot rule men nor serve  
heaven unless you have laid up a  
store:

This 'laying up a store' means  
quickly absorbing.

And 'quickly absorbing' means  
doubling one's garnered 'power'.

Double your garnered power and  
it acquires a strength that nothing  
can overcome.

If there is nothing it cannot  
overcome, it knows no bounds.

And only what knows no bounds  
is huge enough to keep a whole  
kingdom in its grasp.

But only he who having the  
kingdom goes to the Mother  
can keep it long.

This is called the art of making  
roots strike deep by fencing the  
trunk.

of making long by fixed staring.

(Lin)

In managing human affairs, there  
is no better rule than to be sparing.

To be sparing is to forestall;

To forestall is to be prepared and  
strengthened:

To be prepared and strengthened  
is to be ever-victorious;

To be ever-victorious is to have  
infinite capacity;

He who has infinite capacity is  
fit to rule a country.

And the Mother (principle) of a  
ruling country can long endure.

This is to be firmly rooted, to  
have deep strength.

The road to immortality and  
enduring vision.

(Cleary)

To govern the human and serve  
the divine.

nothing compares to frugality.

Only frugality brings early  
recovery;  
early recovery means buildup of  
power.

Build up virtue,  
and master all.

When you master all,  
no one knows your limit.

When no one knows your limit,  
you can maintain a nation.

When you maintain the matrix of  
a nation,

you can last long.

This is called making the root  
deep and the basis firm,

the Way of long life and eternal  
vision.

(Feng&English)

In caring for others and serving  
heaven.

There is nothing like using  
restraint.

Restraint begins with giving up  
one's own ideas.

This depends on Virtue gathered  
in the past.

If there is a good store of Virtue,  
then nothing is impossible.

If nothing is impossible, then  
there are no limits.

If a man knows no limits, then he  
is fit to be a ruler.

The mother principle of ruling  
holds good for a long time.

This is called having deep roots  
and a firm foundation.

The Tao of long life and eternal  
vision.



(Wu)--SIXTY

Ruling a big kingdom is like cooking a small fish.

When a man of Tao reigns over the world, demons have no spiritual powers.

Not that the demons have no spiritual powers, but the spirits themselves do no harm to men.

Not that the spirits do no harm to men, but the Sage himself does no harm to his people.

If only the ruler and his people would refrain from harming each other, all the benefits of life would accumulate in the kingdom.

(Lau)

Governing a large state is like boiling a small fish.

When the empire is ruled in accordance with the way,

The spirits lose their potencies. Or rather, it is not that they lose their potencies.

But that, though they have their potencies, they do not harm the people.

It is not only they who, having their potencies, do not harm the people,

The sage, also, does not harm the people.

As neither does any harm, each attributes the merits to the other.

(Chan)

Ruling a big country is like cooking a small fish.

If Tao is employed to rule the empire,

Spiritual beings will lose their supernatural power.

Not that they lose their spiritual power,

But their spiritual power can no longer harm people.

Not only will their supernatural power not harm people,

But the sage also will not harm people.

When both do not harm each other,

Virtue will be accumulated in both for the benefit (of the people).

(Henricks)

Ruling a large state is like cooking small fish.

When you use the Way to govern the world, evil

spirits won't have godlike power.

Actually, it's not that evil spirits won't have godlike power.

It's that their power will not harm men.

But it's not just that *their* power won't harm men.

The Sage, also, will not harm them.

Since these two do not harm others,

Therefore their Virtues intermingle and return to them.

(Waley)

Ruling a large kingdom is indeed like cooking small fish.

They who by Tao ruled all that is under heaven did not let an evil spirit within them display its powers.

Nay, it was not only that the evil spirit did not display its powers; neither was the Sage's good spirit used to the hurt of other men.

Nor was it only that his good spirit was not used to harm other men, the Sage himself was thus saved from harm.

And so, each being saved from harm, their 'powers' could converge towards a common end.

(Lin)

Rule a big country as you would fry a small fish.

Who rules the world in accord with Tao

Would find that the spirits lose their power.

It is not that the spirits lose their power.

But that they cease to do people harm.

It is no (only) that they cease to do people harm.

The Sage (himself) also does no harm to the people.

When both do not do each other harm.

Virtue (power) flows towards them.

(Cleary)

Governing a large nation is like cooking a little fish.

When the world is ruled by the Way.

the ghosts are powerless.

It is not that the ghosts are powerless;

their spirits do not harm the people.

Not only do the spirits not harm the people;

sages do not harm the people either.

Because the two do not harm each other.

their virtues ultimately combine.

(Feng&English)

Ruling the country is like cooking a small fish.

Approach the universe with Tao.

And evil will have no power.

Not that evil is not powerful.

But its power will not be used to harm others.

Not only will it do no harm to others.

But the sage himself will also be protected.

They do not hurt each other.

And the Virtue in each one refreshes both.

(Wu)--SIXTY-ONE

A great country is like the lowland toward which all streams flow.

It is the Reservoir of all under heaven, the Feminine of the world.

The Feminine always conquers the Masculine by her quietness, by lowering herself through her quietness.

Hence, is a great country can lower itself before a small country, it will win over the small country;

and if a small country can lower itself before a great country, it will win over the great country.

The one wins by stooping; the other, by remaining low.

What a great country wants is simply to embrace more people;

and what a small country wants is simply to come to serve its patron.

Thus, each gets what it wants.

But it behooves a great country to lower itself.

(Lau)

A large state is the lower reaches of a river --

The place where all the streams of the world unite.

In the union of the world,

The female always gets the better of the male by stillness.

Being still, she takes the lower position.

Hence the large state, by taking the lower position, annexes the small state;

The small state, by taking the lower position, affiliates itself to the large state.

Thus the one, by taking the lower position, annexes;

The other, by taking the lower position, is annexed.

All that the large state wants is to take the other under its wing;

All that the small state wants is to have its services accepted by the other.

If each of the two wants to find its proper place,

It is meet that the large should take the lower position.

(Chan)

A big country may be compared to the lower part of a river.

It is the converging point of the world;

It is the female of the world.

The female always overcomes the male by tranquillity.

And by tranquillity she is underneath.

A big state can take over a small state if it places itself below the small state;

And the small state can take over a big state if it places itself below the big state.

Thus some, by placing themselves below, take over (others),

And some, by being (naturally) low, take over (other states).

After all, what a big state wants to but to annex and herd others,

And what a small state wants is merely to join and serve others.

Since both big and small states get what they want.

The big state should place itself low.

(Henricks)

The large state is the lower part of a river;

It is the female of the world;

It is the meeting point of the world.

The female constantly overcomes the male with tranquillity.

Because she is tranquil, therefore she is fittingly underneath.

The large state -- if it is below the small state, then it takes over the small state;

The small state -- if it is below the large state, then it is taken over by the large state.

Therefore some by being low take over,

And some by being low are taken over.

Therefore the large state merely desires to untie and rear others;

While the small state merely desires to enter and serve others.

If both get what they want.

Then the large state should fittingly be underneath.

(Waley)

A large kingdom must be like the low ground towards which all streams flow down.

It must be a point towards which all things under heaven converge.

Its part must be that of the female in its dealings with all things under heaven.

The female by quiescence conquers the male; by quiescence gets underneath.

If a large kingdom can in the same way succeed in getting underneath a small kingdom then it will win the adherence of the small kingdom;

and it is because small kingdoms are by nature in this way underneath large kingdoms that they win the adherence of large kingdoms.

The one must get underneath in order to do it;

the other is underneath and therefore does it.

What large countries really need is more inhabitants;

and what small countries need is some place where their surplus inhabitants can go and get employment.

Thus each gets what it needs.

That is why I say the large kingdom must 'get underneath'.

(Lin)

A big country (must be like) the delta low-regions.

Being the concourse of the world. (And) the Female of the world.

The Female overcomes the Male by quietude.

And achieves the lowly position by quietude.

Therefore if a big country places itself below a small country,

It absorbs the small country;

(And) if a small country places itself below a big country,

It absorbs the big country.

Therefore some place themselves low to absorb (others).

Some are (naturally) low and absorb (others).

What a big country wants is but to shelter others.

And what a small country wants is but to be able to come in and be sheltered.

Thus (considering) that both may have what they want.

A big country ought to place itself low.

(Cleary)

A great nation flows downward into intercourse with the world.

The female of the world always prevails over the male by stillness.

Because stillness is considered lower.

by lowering itself to a small nation

a great nation takes a small nation;

by being lower than a great nation

a small nation takes a great nation.

So one takes by lowering itself, another takes by being lower.

A great nation wants no more than to include and nurture

people;

a small nation wants no more than to admit and serve people.

Both get what they want, so the great should be below.

(Feng&English)

A great country is like low land. It is the meeting ground of the universe.

The mother of the universe.

The female overcomes the male with stillness.

Lying low in stillness.

Therefore if a great country gives way to a smaller country,

It will conquer the smaller country.

And if a small country submits to a great country,

It can conquer the great country.

Therefore those who would conquer must yield.

And those who conquer do so because they yield.

A great nation needs more people;

A small country needs to serve. Each gets what it wants.

It is fitting for a great nation to yield.

(Wu)--SIXTY-TWO

The Tao is the hidden Reservoir of all things.

A treasure to the honest, it is a safeguard to the erring.

A good word will find its own market.

A good deed may be used as a gift to another.

That a man is straying from the right path

Is no reason that he should be cast away.

Hence, at the Enthronement of an Emperor.

Or at the Installation of the Three Ministers.

Let others offer their discs of jade, following it up with teams of horses;

It is better for you to offer the Tao without moving your feet!

Why did the ancients prize the Tao?

Is it not because by virtue of it he who seeks finds.

And the guilty are forgiven?

That is why it is such a treasure to the world.

(Lau)

The way is the refuge for the myriad creatures.

It is that by which the good man protects,

And that by which the bad man is protected.

Beautiful words when offered will win high rank in return;

Beautiful deeds can raise a man above others.

Even if a man is not good, why should he be abandoned?

Hence when the emperor is set up and the three ducal ministers are appointed,

he who makes a present of the way without stirring from his seat is preferable to one who offers presents of jade disks followed by a team of four horses.

Why was this way valued of old?

Was it not said that by means of it one got what one wanted and escaped the consequences when one transgressed?

Therefore it is valued by the empire.

(Chan)

Tao is the storehouse of all things.

It is the good man's treasure and the bad man's refuge.

Fine words can buy honor.

And fine deeds can gain respect from others.

Even if a man is bad, when has (Tao) rejected him?

Therefore on the occasion of crowning an emperor or installing the three ministers,

Rather than present large pieces of jade preceded by teams of four horses,

It is better to kneel and offer this Tao.

Why did the ancients highly value this Tao?

Did they not say, "Those who seek shall have it and those who sin shall be freed"?

For this reason it is valued by the world.

(Henricks)

The way is that toward which all things flow.

It is the treasure of the good man.

And that which protects the bad man.

Beautiful words can be bought and sold;

Honored deeds can be presented to others as gifts;

Even with things that people regard as no good -- will they be rejected?

Therefore, when the Son of Heaven is being enthroned or the Three Ministers installed,

Though you might salute them with disks of jade preceded by teams of four horses,

That's not so good as sitting still and offering this.

The reason why the ancients valued this -- what was it?

Did they not say, "Those who seek, with this will attain, and those who commit offenses, with this will escape"?!

Therefore, it's the most valued thing in the world.

(Waley)

Tao in the Universe is like the south-west corner in the house.

It is the treasure of the good man.

The support of the bad.

There is a traffic in speakers for fine words:

Persons of grave demeanour are accepted as gifts;

Even the bad let slip no opportunity to acquire them.

Therefore on the day of an Emperor's enthronement

Or at the installation of the three officers of State

Rather then send a team of horses, preceded by a disc of jade.

Better were it, as can be done without moving from one's seat, to send this Tao.

For what did the ancients say of this Tao, how did they prize it?

Did they not say of those that have it

'Pursuing, they shall catch; pursued, they shall escape'?

They thought it, indeed, most precious of all things under heaven.

(Lin)

Tao is the mysterious secret of the universe.

The good man's treasure.

And the bad man's refuge.

Beautiful sayings can be sold at the market.

Noble conduct can be presented as a gift.

Though there be bad people.

Why reject them?

Therefore on the crowning of an emperor.

On the appointment of the Three Ministers.

Rather than send tributes of jade and teams of four horses.

Send in the tribute of this Tao.

Wherein did the Ancients prize this Tao?

Did they not say, "to search for the guilty ones and pardon them"?

Therefore is (Tao) the treasure of the world.

(Cleary)

The Way is the pivot of all things:

the treasure of good people.

the safeguard of those who are not good.

Fine words can be sold.

honored acts can oppress people; why should people who are not

good abandon them?

Therefore to establish an emperor

and set up high officials,

one may have a great jewel

and drive a team of horses,

but that is not as good

as advancing calmly on this Way.

Why did the ancients value this Way?

By it one can attain without long seeking

and escape from the faults one has;

therefore it is valued by the world.

(Feng&English)

Tao is the source of the ten thousand things.

It is the treasure of the good man, and the refuge of the bad.

Sweet words can buy honor;

Good deeds can gain respect.

If a man is bad, do not abandon him.

Therefore on the day the emperor is crowned.

Or the three officers of the state installed.

Do not send a gift of jade and a team of four horses.

But remain still and offer the Tao.

Why does everyone like the Tao so much at first?

Isn't it because you find what you seek and are forgiven when you sin?

Therefore this is the greatest treasure of the universe.

(Wu)--SIXTY-THREE

Do the Non-Ado.

Strive for the effortless.

Savour the savourless.

Exalt the low.

Multiply the few.

Requite injury with kindness.

Nip troubles in the bud.

Sow the great in the small.

Difficult things in the world

Can only be tackled when they  
are easy.

Big things in the world

Can only be achieved by  
attending to their small beginnings.

Thus, the Sage never has to  
grapple with big things,

Yet he alone is capable of  
achieving them!

He who promises lightly must be  
lacking in faith.

He who thinks everything is easy  
will end by finding everything  
difficult.

Therefore, the Sage, who regards  
everything as difficult,

Meets with no difficulties in the  
end.

(Lau)

Do that which consists in taking  
no action;

pursue that which is not  
meddlesome;

savour that which has no flavour.

Make the small big and the few  
many;

do good to him who has done you  
an injury.

Lay plans for the  
accomplishment of the difficult  
before it becomes difficult;

make something big by starting  
with it when small.

Difficult things in the world must  
needs have their beginnings in the  
easy;

big things must needs have their  
beginnings in the small.

Therefore it is because the sage  
never attempts to be great that he  
succeeds in becoming great.

One who makes promises rashly  
rarely keeps good faith;

one who is in the habit of  
considering things easy meets with  
frequent difficulties.

Therefore even the sage treats  
some things as difficult.

That is why in the end no  
difficulties can get the better of  
him.

(Chan)

Act without action.

Do without ado.

Taste without tasting.

Whether it is big or small, many  
or few, repay hatred with virtue.

Prepare for the difficult while it  
is still easy.

Deal with the big while it is still  
small.

Difficult undertakings have  
always started with what is easy,

And great undertakings have  
always started with what is small.

Therefore the sage never strives  
for the great,

And thereby the great is  
achieved.

He who makes rash promises  
surely lacks faith.

He who takes things too easily  
will surely encounter much  
difficulty.

For this reason even the sage  
regards things as difficult,

And therefore he encounters no  
difficulty.

(Henricks)

Act without acting;

Serve without concern for  
affairs;

Find flavor in what has no  
flavor.

Regard the small as large and the  
few as many.

And repay resentment with  
kindness.

Plan for the difficult while it is  
easy;

Act on the large while it's minute.

The most difficult things in the  
world begin as things that are  
easy;

The largest things in the world  
arise from the minute.

Therefore the Sage, to the end  
does not strive to do great.

And as a result, he is able to  
accomplish the great;

Those who too lightly agree will  
necessarily be trusted by few;

And those who regard many  
things as easy will necessarily end  
up with many difficulties.

Therefore, even the Sage regards  
things as difficult.

And as a result, in the end has no  
difficulty.

(Walcy)

It acts without action.  
does without doing.  
finds flavour in what is  
flavourless.  
Can make the small great and the  
few many.  
'Requites injuries with good  
deeds.  
Deals with the hard while it is  
still easy.  
With the great while it is still  
small.'  
In the governance of empire  
everything difficult must be dealt  
with while it is still easy,  
Everything great must be dealt  
with while it is still small.  
Therefore the Sage never has to  
deal with the great;  
and so achieves greatness.  
But again 'Light assent inspires  
little confidence  
And "many easies" means many  
a hard.'  
Therefore the Sage knows too  
how to make the easy difficult,  
and by doing so avoid all  
difficulties!

(Lin)

Accomplish do-nothing.  
Attend to no-affairs.  
Taste the flavorless.  
Whether it is big or small, many  
or few.  
Requite hatred with Virtue.  
Deal with the difficult while yet  
it is easy;  
Deal with the big while yet it is  
small.  
The difficult (problems) of the  
world  
Must be dealt with while they are  
yet easy;  
The great (problems) of the  
world  
Must be dealt with while they are  
yet small.  
Therefore the Sage by never  
dealing the great (problems)  
Accomplishes greatness.  
He who lightly makes a promise  
Will find it often hard to keep his  
faith.  
He who makes light of many  
things  
Will encounter many difficulties.  
Hence even the Sage regards  
things as difficult.  
And for that reason never meets  
with difficulties.

(Cleary)

Do nondoing,  
strive for nonstriving,  
savor the flavorless,  
regard the small as important,  
make much of little,  
repay enmity with virtue;  
plan for difficulty when it is still  
easy,  
do the great while it is still small.  
The most difficult things in the  
world  
must be done while they are  
easy;  
the greatest things in the world  
must be done while they are  
small.  
Because of this sages never do  
great things;  
that is why they can fulfill their  
greatness.  
If you agree too easily, you'll be  
little trusted;  
if you take it easy a lot, you'll  
have a lot of problems.  
Therefore it is through difficulty  
that sages end up without  
problems.

(Feng&English)

Practice non-action.  
Work without doing.  
Taste the tasteless.  
Magnify the small, increase the  
few.  
Reward bitterness with care.  
See simplicity in the complicated.  
Achieve greatness in little things.  
In the universe the difficult  
things are done as if they are easy.  
In the universe great acts are  
made up of small deeds.  
The sage does not attempt  
anything very big,  
And thus achieves greatness.  
Easy promises make for little  
trust.  
Taking things lightly results in  
great difficulty.  
Because the sage always  
confronts difficulties,  
He never experiences them.



(Wu)--SIXTY-FOUR

What is at rest is easy to hold.

What manifests no omens is easily forestalled.

What is fragile is easily shattered.

What is small is easily scattered.

Tackle things before they have appeared.

Cultivate peace and order before confusion and disorder have set in.

A tree as big as a man's embrace springs from a tiny sprout.

A tower nine stories high begins with a heap of earth.

A journey of a thousand leagues starts where your feet stand.

He who fusses over anything spoils it.

He who grasps anything loses it.

The Sage fusses over nothing and therefore spoils nothing.

He grips at nothing and therefore loses nothing.

In handling affairs, people often spoil then just at the point of success.

With heedfulness in the beginning and patience at the end, nothing will be spoiled.

Therefore, the Sage desires to be desireless.

Sets no value on rare goods,  
Learns to unlearn his learning,

And induces the masses to return from where they have overpassed.

He only helps all creatures to find their own nature.

But does not venture to lead them by the nose.

(Lau)

It is easy to maintain a situation while it is still secure;

It is easy to deal with a situation before symptoms develop;

It is easy to break a thing when it is yet brittle;

It is easy to dissolve a thing when it is yet minute.

Deal with a thing while it is still nothing;

Keep a thing in order before disorder sets in.

A tree that can fill the span of a man's arms

Grows from a downy tip;

A terrace nine storeys high

Rises from hodfuls of earth;

A journey of a thousand miles

Starts from beneath one's feet.

Whoever does anything to it will ruin it; whoever lays hold of it will lose it.

Therefore the sage, because he does nothing, never ruins anything; and, because he does not lay hold of anything, loses nothing.

In their enterprises the people  
Always ruin them when on the verge of success.

Be as careful at the end as at the beginning

And there will be no ruined enterprises.

Therefore the sage desires no to desire

And does not value goods which are hard to come by;

Learns to be without learning

And makes good the mistakes of the multitude

In order to help the myriad creatures to be natural and to refrain from daring to act.

(Chan)

What remains still is easy to hold.

What is not yet manifest is easy to plan for.

What is brittle is easy to crack.

What is minute is easy to scatter.

Deal with things before they appear.

Put things in order before disorder arises.

A tree as big as a man's embrace grows from a tiny shoot.

A tower of nine storeys begins with a heap of earth.

The journey of a thousand *li* starts from where one stands.

He who takes an action fails.

He who grasps things loses them.

For this reason the sage takes no action and therefore does not fail.

He grasps nothing and therefore he does not lose anything.

People in their handling of affairs often fail when they are about to succeed.

If one remains as careful at the end as he was at the beginning, there will be no failure.

Therefore the sage desires to have no desire.

He does not value rare treasures.

He learns to be unlearned, and return to what the multitude has missed (Tao).

Thus he supports all things in their natural state but does not take any action.

(Henricks)

What is at rest is easy to hold;

What has not yet given a sign is easy to plan for;

The brittle is easily shattered;

The minute is easily scattered;

Act on it before it comes into being;

Order it before it turns into chaos.

A tree so big that it takes both arms to surround starts out as the tiniest shoot;

A nine-story terrace rises up from a basket of dirt.

A high place one hundred, one thousand feet high begins from under your feet.

Those who act on it ruin it;

Those who hold on to it lose it.

Therefore the Sage does not act.

And as a result, he doesn't ruin things;

He does not hold on to things,

And as a result, he doesn't lose things;

In people's handling of affairs, they always ruin things when they're right at the point of completion.

Therefore we say, "If you're as careful at the end as you were at the beginning, you'll have no failures."

Therefore the Sage desires not to desire and doesn't value goods that are hard to obtain;

He learns not to learn and returns to what the masses pass by;

He could help all things to be natural, yet he dare not do it.

(Waley)

'What stays still is easy to hold:  
Before there has been an omen it is  
easy to lay plans.

What is tender is easily torn.

What is minute is easy to scatter.'

Deal with things in their state of  
not-yet-being.

Put them in order before they have  
got into confusion.

For 'the tree big as a man's  
embrace began as a tiny sprout,

The tower nine storeys high began  
with a heap of earth,

The journey of a thousand leagues  
began with what was under the feet'.

He who acts, harms; he who grabs,  
lets slip.

Whereas the people of the world,  
at their tasks,

Constantly spoil things when  
within an ace of completing them.

'Heed the end no less than the  
beginning.'

And your work will not be spoiled.

Therefore the Sage wants only  
things that are unwanted,

Sets no store by products difficult  
to get.

And so teaches things untaught.

Turning all men back to the things  
they have left behind,

That the ten thousand creatures  
may be restored to their Self-so.

This he does; but dare not act.

(Lin)

That which lies still is easy to  
hold:

That which is not yet manifest is  
easy to forestall:

That which is brittle (like ice) is  
easy to melt:

That which is minute is easy to  
scatter.

Deal with a things before it is  
there:

Check disorder before it is rife.

A tree with a full span's girth  
begins from a tiny sprout:

A nine-storied terrace begins with  
a clod of earth.

A journey of a thousand *li* begins  
at one's feet.

He who acts, spoils;

He who grasps, lets slip.

Because the Sage does not act, he  
does not spoil,

Because he does not grasp, he does  
not let slip.

The affairs of men are often  
spoiled within an ace of completion.

By being careful at the end as at  
the beginning failure is averted.

Therefore the Sage desire to have  
no desire.

And values not objects difficult to  
obtain.

Learns that which is unlearned.

And restores what the multitude  
have lost.

That he may assist in the course of  
Nature

And not presume to interfere.

(Cleary)

What is at rest is easy to hold.

What has not shown up is easy to  
take into account.

What is frail is easy to break.

What is vague is easy to dispel.

Do it before it exists;

govern it before there's disorder.

The most massive tree grows from  
a sprout:

the highest building rises from a  
pile of earth:

a journey of a thousand miles  
begins with a step.

Those who contrive spoil it;  
those who cling lose it.

Thus sages contrive nothing,  
and so spoil nothing.

They cling to nothing,  
and so lose nothing.

Therefore people's works are  
always spoiled on the verge of  
completion.

Be as careful of the end as of the  
beginning,

and nothing will be spoiled.

Thus sages want to have no  
wants;

they do not value goods hard to  
get.

They learn not learning to  
recover from people's excesses,  
thereby to assist the naturalness  
of all beings.

without daring to contrive.

(Feng&English)

Peace is easily maintained;

Trouble is easily overcome  
before it starts.

The brittle is easily shattered;

The small is easily scattered.

Deal with it before it happens.

Set things in order before there is  
confusion.

A tree as great as a man's  
embrace springs from a small  
shoot:

A terrace nine stories high begins  
with a pile of earth;

A journey of a thousand miles  
starts under one's feet.

He who acts defeats his own  
purpose;

He who grasps loses.

The sage does not act, and so is  
not defeated.

He does not grasp and therefore  
does not lose.

People usually fail when they are  
on the verge of success.

So give as much care to the end  
as to the beginning;

Then there will be no failure.

Therefore the sage seeks freedom  
from desire.

He does not collect precious  
things.

He learns not to hold on to ideas.  
He brings men back to what they  
have lost.

He helps the ten thousand things  
find their own nature.

But refrains from action.

(Wu)--SIXTY-FIVE

In the old days, those who were well versed in the practice of the Tao did not try to enlighten the people.

but rather to keep them in a state of simplicity.

For, why are the people hard to govern?

Because they are too clever!

Therefore, he who governs his state with cleverness is its malefactor;

but he who governs his state without resorting to cleverness is its benefactor.

To know these principles is to possess a rule and a measure.

To keep the rule and the measure constantly in your mind is what we call Mystical Virtue.

Deep and far-reaching is Mystical Virtue!

It leads all things to return, till they come back to Great Harmony!

(Lau)

Of old those who excelled in the pursuit of the way did not use it to enlighten the people but to hoodwink them.

The reason why the people are difficult to govern is that they are too clever.

Hence to rule a state by cleverness

Will be to the detriment of the state;

Not to rule a state by cleverness

Will be a boon to the state.

These two are models.

Always to know the models

Is known as mysterious virtue.

Mysterious virtue is profound and far-reaching.

But when things turn back it turns back with them.

Only then is complete conformity realized.

(Chan)

In ancient times those who practiced Tao well

Did not seek to enlighten the people, but make them ignorant.

People are difficult to govern because they have too much knowledge.

Therefore he who rules the state through knowledge is a robber of the state;

He who rules a state not through knowledge is a blessing to the state.

One who knows these two things also (knows) the standard.

Always to know the standard is called profound and secret virtue.

Virtue becomes deep and far-reaching.

And with it all things return to their original natural state.

Then complete harmony will be reached.

(Henricks)

Those who practiced the Way in antiquity,

Did not use it to enlighten the people.

Rather, they used it to make them dumb.

Now the reason why people are difficult to rule is because of their knowledge;

As a result, to use knowledge to rule the state

Is thievery of the state;

To use ignorance to rule the state

Is kindness to the state.

One who constantly understands these two,

Also understands the principle.

To constantly understand the principle --

This is called Profound Virtue.

Profound Virtue is deep, is far-reaching,

And together with things it returns.

Thus we arrive at the Great Accord.

(Waley)

In the days of old those who  
practiced Tao with success did not,  
by means of it, enlighten the  
people.

but on the contrary sought to  
make them ignorant.

The more knowledge people  
have, the harder they are to rule.

Those who seek to rule by giving  
knowledge

Are like bandits preying on the  
land.

Those who rule without giving  
knowledge

Bring a stock of good fortune to  
the land.

To have understood the  
difference between these two  
things is to have a test and  
standard.

To be always able to apply this  
test and standard

Is called the mysterious 'power'.

The mysterious 'power', so deep-  
penetrating,

So far-reaching,

That can follow things back --

All the way back to the Great  
Concordance.

(Lin)

The Ancients who knew how to  
follow the Tao

Aimed not to enlighten the  
people.

But to keep them ignorant.

The reason it is difficult for the  
people to live in peace

Is because of too much  
knowledge.

Those who seek to rule a country  
by knowledge

Are the nation's curse.

Those who seek not to rule a  
country by knowledge

Are the nation's blessing.

Those who know these two  
(principles)

Also know the Ancient Standard.

And to know the Ancient

Standard

Is called the Mystic Virtue.

When the Mystic Virtue becomes  
clear, far-reaching,

And things revert back (to their  
source),

Then an then only emerges the  
Grand Harmony.

(Cleary)

In ancient times,  
good practitioners of the Way  
did not use it to enlighten the  
people.

but to make them  
unsophisticated.

When people are unruly,  
it is because of their  
sophistication.

So to govern a country by  
cunning

is to rob the country.

Not using cunning to govern a  
country

is good fortune for the country.

To know these two

is also a model.

Being always aware of the model  
is called hidden virtue.

Hidden virtue is deep, far  
reaching,

in contrast to ordinary people.

Only when it is thus

does it reach great accord.

(Feng&English)

In the beginning those who knew  
the Tao did not try to enlighten  
others.

But kept it hidden.

Why is it so hard to rule?

Because people are so clever.

Rulers who try to use cleverness

Cheat the country.

Those who rule without  
cleverness

Are a blessing to the land.

These are the two alternatives.

Understanding these is Primal  
Virtue.

Primal Virtue is deep and far.

It leads all things back

Toward the great oneness.

(Wu)--SIXTY-SIX

How does the sea become the king of all streams?

Because it is lower than they!  
Hence it is the king of all streams.

Therefore, the Sage reigns over the people by humbling himself in speech;

And leads the people by putting himself behind.

Thus it is that when a Sage stands above the people, they do not feel the heaviness of his weight;

And when he stands in front of the people, they do not feel hurt.

Therefore all the world is glad to push him forward without getting tired of him.

Just because he strives with nobody,

Nobody can ever strive with him.

(Lau)

The reason why the River and the Sea are able to be king of the hundred valleys is that they excel in taking the lower position.

Hence they are able to be king of the hundred valleys.

Therefore, desiring to rule over people,

One must in one's words humble oneself before them;

And, desiring to lead people,

One must, in one's person, follow behind them.

Therefore the sage takes his place over the people yet is no burden;

takes his place ahead of the people yet causes no obstruction.

That is why the empire supports him joyfully and never tires of doing so.

It is because he does not contend that no one in the empire is in a position to contend with him.

(Chan)

The great rivers and seas are kings of all mountain streams

Because they skillfully stay below them.

That is why they can be their kings.

Therefore, in order to be the superior of the people,

One must, in the use of words, place himself below them.

And in order to be ahead of the people,

One must, in one's own person, follow them.

Therefore the sage places himself above the people and they do not feel his weight.

He places himself in front of them and the people do not harm him.

Therefore the world rejoices in praising him without getting tired of it.

It is precisely because he does not compete that the world cannot compete with him.

(Henricks)

The reason why rivers and oceans are able to be the kings of the one hundred valleys is that they are good at being below them.

For this reason they are able to be the kings of the one hundred valleys.

Therefore in the Sage's desire to be above the people,

He must in his speech be below them.

And in his desire to be at the front of the people,

He must in his person be behind them.

Thus he dwells above; yet the people do not regard him as heavy;

And he dwells in front, yet the people do not see him as posing a threat.

The whole world delights in his praise and never tires of him.

Is it not because he is not contentious,

That, as a result, no one in the world can contend with him?!

(Waley)

How did the great rivers and seas  
get their kingship over the hundred  
lesser streams?

Through the merit of being lower  
than they; that was how they got  
their kingship.

Therefore the Sage

In order to be above the people  
Must speak as though he were  
lower than the people.

In order to guide them

He must put himself behind  
them.

Only thus can the Sage be on top  
and the people not be crushed by  
his weight.

Only thus can he guide, and the  
people not be led into harm.

Indeed in this way everything  
under heaven will be glad to be  
pushed by him and will not find his  
guidance irksome.

This he does by not striving; and  
because he does not strive, none  
can contend with him.

(Lin)

How did the great rivers and seas  
become the Lords of the Ravines?

By being good at keeping low.

That was how they became the  
Lords of the Ravines.

Therefore in order to be chief  
among the people.

One must speak like their  
inferiors.

In order to be foremost among  
the people.

One must walk behind them.

Thus it is that the Sage stays  
above.

And the people do not feel his  
weight;

Walks in front.

And the people do not wish him  
harm.

Then the people of the world are  
glad to uphold him forever.

Because he does not contend,

No one in the world can contend  
against him.

(Cleary)

The reason why rivers and seas  
can be lords of the hundred valleys  
is that they lower themselves to  
them well;

therefore they can be lords of the  
hundred valleys.

So when sages wish to rise above  
people.

they lower themselves to them in  
their speech.

When they want to precede  
people,

they go after them in status.

So when sages rule,

people don't take it gravely.

And when sage are in the  
forefront.

people don't attack them.

Because they do not contend,

no one in the world can contend  
with them.

(Feng&English)

Why is the sea king of a hundred  
streams?

Because it lies below them.

Therefore it is the king of a  
hundred streams.

If the sage would guide the

people, he must serve with  
humility.

If he would lead them, he must  
follow behind.

In this way when the sage rules,  
the people will not feel oppressed;

When he stands before them,

they will not be harmed.

The whole world will support  
him and will not tire of him.

Because he does not compete,

He does not meet competition.

(Wu)--SIXTY-SEVEN

All the world says that my Tao is great, but seems queer, like nothing on earth.

But it is just because my Tao is great that it is like nothing on earth!

If it were like anything on earth, how small it would have been from the beginning!

I have Three Treasures, which I hold fast and watch over closely.

The first is *Mercy*.

The second is *Frugality*.

The third is *Not Daring to Be First in the World*.

Because I am merciful, therefore I can be brave.

Because I am frugal, therefore I can be generous.

Because I dare not be first, therefore I can be the chief of all vessels.

If a man wants to be brave without first being merciful, generous without first being frugal, a leader without first wishing to follow, he is only courting death!

Mercy alone can help you win a war.

Mercy alone can help you to defend your state.

For Heaven will come to the rescue of the merciful, and protect him with *its* Mercy.

(Lau)

The whole world says that my way is vast and resembles nothing.

It is because it is vast that it resembles nothing.

If it resembles anything, it would, long before now, have become small.

I have three treasures

Which I hold and cherish.

The first is known as compassion,

The second is known as frugality,

The third is known as not daring to take the lead in the empire;

Being compassionate one could afford to be courageous,

Being frugal one could afford to extend one's territory,

Not daring to take the lead in the empire one could afford to be lord over the vessels.

Now, to forsake compassion for courage, to forsake frugality for expansion, to forsake the rear for the lead, is sure to end in death.

Through compassion, one will triumph in attack and be impregnable in defense.

What heaven succours it protects with the gift of compassion.

(Chan)

All the world says that my Tao is great and does not seem to resemble (the ordinary).

It is precisely because it is great that it does not resemble (the ordinary).

If it did resemble, it would have been small for a long time.

I have three treasures.

Guard and keep them:

The first is deep love,

The second is frugality,

And the third is not to dare to be ahead of the world.

Because of deep love, one is courageous.

Because of frugality, one is generous.

Because of not daring to be ahead of the world, one becomes the leader of the world.

Now, to be courageous by forsaking deep love, to be generous by forsaking frugality, and to be ahead of the world by forsaking following behind -- this is fatal.

For deep love helps one to win in the case of attack.

And to be firm in the case of defense.

When Heaven is to save a person.

Heaven will protect him through deep love.

(Henricks)

The whole world says, I'm Great; Great, yet unlike everyone else.

But it's precisely because I'm unlike everyone else, that I'm therefore able to be Great.

Were I like everyone else, for a long time now I'd have seemed insignificant and small.

I constantly have three treasures; Hold on to them and treasure them.

The first is compassion;

The second is frugality;

And the third is not presuming to be at the forefront in the world.

Now, it's because I'm compassionate that I therefore can be courageous;

And it's because I'm frugal that I therefore can be magnanimous;

And it's because I don't presume to be at the forefront in the world that I therefore can be the head of those with complete talent.

Now, if you abandon the compassion and yet try to be courageous, and if you abandon this frugality and yet try to be magnanimous, and if you abandon this staying behind and yet go to the fore, then you will die.

If with compassion you attack, then you'll win; if you defend, then you'll stand firm.

When Heaven's about to establish him, it's as though he surrounds him with the protective wall of compassion.

(Waley)

Every one under heaven says that  
our Way is greatly like folly.

But it is just because it is great,  
that it seems like folly.

As for things that do not seem  
like folly -- well, there can be no  
question about *their* smallness!

Here are my three treasures.

Guard and keep them!

The first is pity;

the second, frugality;

the third: refusal to be 'foremost  
of all things under heaven'.

For only he that pities is truly  
able to be brave;

Only he that is frugal is truly  
able to be profuse.

Only he that refuses to be  
foremost of all things is truly able  
to be chief of all Ministers.

At present your bravery is not  
based on pity, not your profusion  
on frugality, nor your vanguard on  
your rear; and this is death.

But pity cannot fight without  
conquering or guard without  
saving.

Heaven arms with pity whose  
whom it would not see destroyed.

(Lin)

All the world says: my teaching  
(Tao) greatly resembles folly.

Because it is great; therefore it  
resembles folly.

If it did not resemble folly, it  
would have long ago become petty  
indeed!

I have Three Treasures;

Guard them and keep them safe:

The first is Love.

The second is. Never too much.

The third is. Never be the first in  
the world.

Through Love, one has no fear;

Through not doing too much, one  
has amplitude (of reserve power);

Through not presuming to be  
first in the world, one can develop  
one's talent and let it mature.

If one forsakes love and  
fearlessness, forsakes restraint and  
reserve power, forsakes following  
behind and rushes in front, he is  
dead!

For love is victorious in attack,

And invulnerable in defense.

Heaven arms with love

Those it would not see destroyed.

(Cleary)

Everyone in the world say my  
Way is great, but it seems  
incomparable.

It is just because it is great that it  
seems incomparable:

when comparisons are long  
established it becomes trivialized.

I have three treasures that I keep  
and hold:

one is mercy,

the second is frugality,

the third is not presuming to be  
at the head of the world.

By reason of mercy, one can be  
brave.

By reason of frugality, one can  
be broad.

By not presuming to be at the  
head of the world, one can make  
your potential last.

Now if one were bold but had no  
mercy, if one were broad but were  
not frugal, if one went ahead  
without deference, one would die.

Use mercy in war, and you win;  
use it for defense, and you are  
secure.

Those whom heaven is going to  
save are those it guards with  
mercy.

(Feng&English)

Everyone under heaven says that  
my Tao is great and beyond  
compare.

Because it is great, it seems  
different.

It is were not different, it would  
have vanished long ago.

I have three treasures which I  
hold and keep.

The first is mercy;

The second is economy;

The third is daring not to be  
ahead of others.

From mercy comes courage;

From economy comes generosity;

From humility comes leadership.

Nowadays men shun mercy but  
try to be brave;

They abandon economy, but try  
to be generous;

They do not believe in humility,  
but always try to be first.

This is certain death.

Mercy brings victory in battle  
and strength in defense.

It is the means by which heaven  
saves and guards.



(Wu)--SIXTY-EIGHT

A good soldier is never  
aggressive;

A good fighter is never angry.

The best way of conquering an  
enemy

Is to win him over by not  
antagonizing him.

The best way of employing a  
man

Is to serve under him.

This is called the virtue of non-  
striving!

This is called using the abilities  
of men!

This is called being wedded to  
Heaven as of old!

(Lau)

One who excels as a warrior  
does not appear formidable;

One who excels in fighting is  
never roused in anger;

One who excels in defeating his  
enemy does not join issue;

One who excels in employing  
others humbles himself before  
them.

This is known as the virtue of  
non-contention;

This is known as making use of  
the efforts of others;

This is known as matching the  
sublimity of heaven.

(Chan)

A skillful leader of troops is not  
oppressive with his military  
strength.

A skillful fighter does not  
become angry.

A skillful conqueror does not  
compete with people.

One who is skillful in using men  
puts himself below them.

This is called the virtue of not-  
competing.

This is called the strength to use  
men.

This is called matching Heaven,  
the highest principle of old.

(Henricks)

Therefore, the one who is good at  
being a warrior doesn't make a  
show of his might;

One who is good in battle doesn't  
get angry;

One who is good at defeating the  
enemy doesn't engage him.

And one who is good at using  
men places himself below them.

This is called the virtue of not  
competing;

This is called correctly using  
men;

This is called matching Heaven.  
It's the high point of the past.

(Waley)

The best charioteers do not rush  
ahead;

The best fighters do not make  
displays of wrath.

The greatest conqueror wins  
without joining issue;

The best user of men acts as  
though he were their inferior.

This is called the power that  
comes of not contending,

Is called the capacity to use men,

The secret of being mated to  
heaven, to what was of old.

(Lin)

The brave soldier is not violent;  
The good fighter does not lose  
his temper;

The great conqueror does not  
fight (on small issues);

The good user of men places  
himself below others.

-- This is the Virtue of not  
contending,

Is called the capacity to use men,

Is reaching to the height of being

Mated to Heaven, to what was of  
old.

(Cleary)

Good warriors do not arm,  
good fighters don't get mad,  
good winners don't contend,  
good employers serve their  
workers.

This is called the virtue of  
noncontention;

this is called mating with the  
supremely natural and pristine.

(Feng&English)

A good soldier is not violent.

A good fighter is not angry.

A good winner is not vengeful.

A good employer is humble.

This is known as the Virtue of  
not striving.

This is known as ability to deal  
with people.

This since ancient times has been  
known as the ultimate unity with  
heaven.

(Wu)--SIXTY-NINE

The strategists have a saying:

I dare not be a host, but rather a guest;

I dare not advance an inch, but rather a foot.

This is called marching without moving,

Rolling up one's sleeves without baring one's arms,

Capturing the enemy without confronting him,

Holding a weapon that is invisible.

There is no greater calamity than to under-estimate the strength of your enemy.

For to under-estimate the strength of your enemy is to lose your treasure.

Therefore, when opposing troops meet in battle,

victory belongs to the grieving side.

(Lau)

The strategists have a saying,

I dare not play the host but play the guest,

I dare not advance an inch but retreat a foot instead.

This is known as marching forward when there is no road,

Rolling up one's sleeves when there is no arm,

Dragging one's adversary by force when there is no adversary,

And taking up arms when there are no arms.

There is no disaster greater than taking on an enemy too easily.

So doing nearly cost me my treasure.

Thus of two sides raising arms against each other,

it is the one that is sorrow stricken that wins.

(Chan)

The strategists say:

"I dare not take the offensive but I take the defensive;

I dare not advance an inch but I retreat a foot."

This means:

To march without formation,

To stretch one's arms without showing it,

To confront enemies without seeming to meet them,

To hold weapons without seeming to have them.

There is no greater disaster than to make light of the enemy.

Making light of the enemy will destroy my treasures.

Therefore when armies are mobilized and issues joined,

The man who is sorry over the fact will win.

(Henricks)

Those who use weapons have a saying which goes:

"I don't presume to act like the host, and instead play the part of the guest;

I don't advance an inch, but rather retreat a foot."

This is called moving forward without moving forward --

Rolling up one's sleeves without baring one's arms --

Grasping firmly without holding a weapon --

And enticing to fight when there's no opponent.

Of disasters, none is greater than thinking you have no rival.

To think you have no rival is to come close to losing my treasures.

Therefore, when weapons are raised and the opponents are fairly matched,

Then it's the one who feels grief that will win.

(Waley)

The strategists have a saying:  
'When you doubt your ability to  
meet the enemy's attack, take the  
offensive yourself',

and 'If you doubt your ability to  
advance an inch, then retreat a  
foot'.

This latter is what we call to  
march without moving,

To roll the sleeve, but present no  
bare arm,

The hand that seems to hold, yet  
has no weapon in it,

A host that can confront, yet  
presents no battle-front.

Now the greatest of all calamities  
is to attack and find no enemy.

I can have no enemy only at the  
price of losing my treasure.

Therefore when armies are raised  
and issues joined it is he who does  
not delight in war that wins.

(Lin)

There is the maxim of military  
strategists;

I dare not be first to invade, but  
rather be invaded.

Dare not press forward an inch,  
but rather retreat a foot.

That is, to march without  
formations,

To roll up the sleeves,

To charge not in frontal attacks,

To arm without weapons.

There is no greater catastrophe  
than to underestimate the enemy.

To underestimate the enemy  
might entail the loss of my  
treasures.

It is the man of sorrow who wins.

(Cleary)

There are sayings on the use of  
arms:

"Let us not be aggressors, but  
defend."

"Let us not advance an inch, but  
retreat a foot."

This is called carrying out no  
action,

shaking no arm,

facing no enemy,

wielding no weapon.

No calamity is greater than  
underestimating opponents.

If you underestimate opponents,  
you're close to losing your  
treasure.

So when opposing armies clash,  
the compassionate are the ones  
who win.

(Feng&English)

There is a saying among soldiers:

I dare not make the first move  
but would rather play the guest;

I dare not advance an inch but  
would rather withdraw a foot.

This is called marching without  
appearing to move,

Rolling up your sleeves without  
showing your arm,

Capturing the enemy without  
attacking,

Being armed without weapons.

There is no greater catastrophe  
than underestimating the enemy.

By underestimating the enemy, I  
almost lose what I value.

Therefore when the battle is  
joined,

The underdog will win.

(Wu)--SEVENTY

My words are very easy to understand and very easy to practice:

But the world cannot understand them, nor practice them.

My words have an Ancestor.

My deeds have a Lord.

The people have no knowledge of this.

Therefore, they have no knowledge of me.

The fewer persons know me,

The nobler are they that follow me.

Therefore, the Sage wears coarse clothes,

While keeping the jade in his bosom.

(Lau)

My words are very easy to understand and very easy to put into practice,

yet no one in the world can understand them or put them into practice.

Words have an ancestor and affairs have a sovereign.

It is because people are ignorant that they fail to understand me.

Those who understand me are few;

Those who imitate me are honoured.

Therefore the sage, while clad in homespun,

conceals on his person a priceless piece of jade.

(Chan)

My doctrines are very easy to understand and very easy to practice,

But none in the world can understand or practice them.

My doctrines have a source (Nature);

my deeds have a master (Tao).

It is because people do not understand this that they do not understand me.

Few people know me, and therefore I am highly valued.

Therefore the sage wears a coarse cloth on top and carries jade within his bosom.

(Henricks)

My words are easy to understand,

And easy to put into practice.

Yet no one in the world can understand them,

And no one can put them into practice.

Now my words have an ancestor, and my deeds have a lord.,

And it's simply because people have no understanding of *them*, that they therefore don't understand me.

But when those who understand me are few, then I'm of great value.

Therefore the Sage wears coarse woolen cloth, but inside it he holds on to jade.

(Waley)

My words are very easy to understand and very easy to practice.

Yet no one under heaven understands them;

no one puts them into practice.

But my words have an ancestry, my deeds have a lord;

and it is precisely because men do not understand this that they are unable to understand me.

Few then understand me;

but it is upon this very fact that my value depends.

It is indeed in this sense that 'the Sage wears hair-cloth on top, but carries jade underneath his dress'.

(Lin)

My teachings are very easy to understand and very easy to practice,

But no one can understand them and no one can practice them.

In my words there is a principle.

In the affairs of men there is a system.

Because they know not these, They also know me not.

Since there are few that know me,

Therefore I am distinguished.

Therefore the Sage wears a coarse cloth on top

And carries jade within his bosom.

(Cleary)

My sayings are very easy to recognize, and very easy to apply.

But no one in the world can recognize them,

and no one can apply them.

Sayings have a source, events have a leader.

It is only through ignorance that I am not known.

Those who know me are rare; those who emulate me are noble.

This is why sages dress plainly, and conceal what is precious.

(Feng&English)

My words are easy to understand and easy to perform,

Yet no man under heaven knows them or practices them.

My words have ancient beginnings.

My actions are disciplined.

Because men do not understand, they have no knowledge of me.

Those that know me are few; Those that abuse me are honored.

Therefore the sage wears rough clothing and holds the jewel in his heart.

(Wu)--SEVENTY-ONE

To realize that our knowledge is  
ignorance.

This is a noble insight.

To regard our ignorance as  
knowledge.

This is mental sickness.

Only when we are sick of our  
sickness

Shall we cease to be sick.

The Sage is not sick, being sick  
of sickness;

This is the secret of health.

(Lau)

To know yet to think that one  
does not know is best;

Not to know yet to think that one  
knows will lead to difficulty.

It is being alive to difficulty that  
one can avoid it.

The sage meets with no  
difficulty.

It is because he is alive to it that  
he meets with no difficulty.

(Chan)

To know that you do not know is  
the best.

To pretend to know when you do  
not know is a disease.

Only when one recognizes this  
disease as a disease can one be  
free from the disease.

The sage is free from the disease.

Because he recognizes this  
disease to be disease, he is free  
from it.

(Henricks)

To know you don't know is best.

Not to know you don't know is a  
flaw.

Therefore, the Sage's not being  
flawed

Stems from his recognizing a  
flaw as a flaw.

Therefore, he is flawless.

(Waley)

To know when one does not know is best.

To think one knows when one does not know is a dire disease.

Only he who recognizes this disease as a disease

Can cure himself of the disease.

The Sage's way of curing disease

Also consists in making people recognize their diseases as diseases and thus ceasing to be diseased.

(Lin)

Who knows that he does not know is the highest;

Who (pretends to) know what he does not know is sick-minded.

And who recognizes sick-mindedness as sick-mindedness is not sick-minded.

The Sage is not sick-minded.

Because he recognizes sick-mindedness and sick-mindedness, Therefore he is not sick-minded.

(Cleary)

To know unconsciously is best.

To presume to know what you don't is sick.

Only by recognizing the sickness of sickness is it possible not to be sick.

The sages' freedom from ills was from recognizing the sickness of sickness, so they didn't suffer from sickness.

(Feng&English)

Knowing ignorance is strength.

Ignoring knowledge is sickness.

If one is sick of sickness, then one is not sick.

The sage is not sick because he is sick of sickness.

Therefore he is not sick.



(Wu)--SEVENTY-TWO

When the people no longer fear  
your power,

It is a sign that a greater power is  
coming.

Interfere not lightly with their  
dwelling,

Nor lay heavy burdens upon their  
livelihood.

Only when you cease to weary  
them,

They will cease to be wearied of  
you.

Therefore, the Sage knows  
himself,

But makes no show of himself;  
Loves himself,

But does not exalt himself.

He prefers what is within to what  
is without.

(Lau)

When the people lack a proper  
sense of awe,

then some awful visitation will  
descend upon them.

Do not constrict their living space;  
do not press down on their means  
of livelihood.

It is because you do not press  
down on them that they will not  
weary of the burden.

Hence the sage knows himself  
but does not display himself,  
loves himself but does not exalt  
himself.

Therefore he discards the one  
and takes the other.

(Chan)

When the people do not fear of  
what is dreadful,

Then what is greatly dreadful  
will descend on them.

Do not reduce the living space of  
their dwellings.

Do not oppress their lives.

It is because you do not oppress  
them that they are not oppressed.

Therefore the sage knows himself  
but does not show himself.

He loves himself but does not  
exalt himself.

Therefore he rejects the one but  
accepts the other.

(Henricks)

When the people don't respect  
those in power,  
then what is greatly feared is  
about to arrive.

Don't narrow the size of the  
places in which they live;

Don't oppress them in their  
means of livelihood.

It's simply because you do not  
oppress them, that they therefore  
will not be fed up.

Therefore the Sage knows  
himself but doesn't show himself;

He cherishes himself but doesn't  
value himself.

For this reason, he rejects that  
and takes this.

(Waley)

Never mind if the people are not  
intimidated by your authority.

A Mightier Authority will deal  
with them in the end.

Do not narrow their dwellings or  
harass their lives;

and for the very reason that you  
do not harass them,

they will cease to turn from you.

Therefore the Sage knows  
himself but does not show himself.

Knows his own value, but does  
not put himself on high.

Truly, 'he rejects that but takes  
this'.

(Lin)

When people have no fear of  
force.

Then (as is the common practice)  
great force descends on them.

Despise not their dwellings.

Dislike not their progeny.

Because you do not dislike them.

You will not be disliked yourself.

Therefore the Sage knows  
himself, but does not show  
himself,

Loves himself, but does not exalt  
himself.

Therefore he rejects the one  
(force) and accepts the other  
(gentility).

(Cleary)

When the people are not awed by  
authority,

then great authority is attained.

Their homes are not small to  
them,

their livelihood not tiresome.

Just because they do not tire of  
it,

it is not tiresome to them.

Therefore sages know themselves  
but do not see themselves.

They take care of themselves but  
do not exalt themselves.

So they take one and leave the  
other.

(Feng&English)

When men lack a sense of awe,  
there will be a disaster.

Do not intrude in their homes.

Do not harass them at work.

If you do not interfere, they will  
not weary of you.

Therefore the sage knows himself  
but makes no show,

Has self-respect but is not  
arrogant.

He lets go of that and chooses  
this.

(Wu)--SEVENTY-THREE

He who is brave in daring will be killed;

He who is brave in not daring will survive.

Of these two kinds of bravery, one is beneficial, while the other proves harmful.

Some things are detested by Heaven,

But who knows the reason?  
Even the Sage is baffled by such a question.

It is Heaven's Way to conquer without striving,

To get responses without speaking,

To induce the people to come without summoning,

To act according to plans without haste.

Vast is Heaven's net;  
Sparse-meshed it is, yet

Nothing can slip through it.

(Lau)

He who is fearless in being bold will meet with his death;

He who is fearless in being timid will stay alive.

Of the two, one leads to good, the others to harm.

Heaven hates what it hates,  
Who knows the reason why?

Therefore even the sage treats some things as difficult.

The way of heaven  
Excels in overcoming though it does not contend,

In responding though it does not speak,

In attracting though it does not summon,

In laying plans though it appears slack.

The net of heaven is cast wide.

Though the mesh is not fine, yet nothing ever slips through.

(Chan)

He who is brave in daring will be killed.

He who is brave in not daring will live.

Of these two, one is advantageous and one is harmful.

Who knows why Heaven dislikes what it dislikes?

Even the sage considers it difficult to question.

The Way of Heaven does not compete, and yet it skillfully achieves victory.

It does not speak, and yet it skillfully responds to things.

It comes to you without your invitation.

It is not anxious about thing and yet it plans well.

Heaven's net is indeed vast.

Though its meshes are wide, it misses nothing.

(Henricks)

If you're brave in being daring, you'll be killed;

If you're brave in not being daring, you'll live.

With these two things, in one case there's profit, in the other there's harm.

The things Heaven hates -- who knows why?

The Way of Heaven is not to fight yet to be good at winning --

Not to speak yet skillfully respond --

No one summons it, yet it comes on its own --

To be at ease yet carefully plan.

Heaven's net is large and vast;

Its mesh may be coarse yet nothing slips through.

(Waley)

He whose braveness lies in  
daring, slays.

He whose braveness lies in not  
daring, gives life.

Of these two, either may be  
profitable or unprofitable.

But 'Heaven hates what it hates;

None can know the reason why.'

Wherefore the Sage, too,  
disallows it.

For it is the way of Heaven not  
to strive but none the less to  
conquer.

Not to speak, but none the less to  
get an answer.

Not to beckon; yet things come  
to it of themselves.

Heaven is like one who says  
little, yet none the less has laid his  
plans.

Heaven's net is wide;

Coarse are the meshes, yet  
nothing slips through.

(Lin)

Who is brave in daring (you) kill.

Who is brave in not daring (you)  
let live.

In these two.

There is some advantage and  
some disadvantage.

(Even if) Heaven dislikes certain  
people.

Who would know (who are to be  
killed and) why?

Therefore even the Sage regards  
it as a difficult question.

Heaven's Way (Tao) is good at  
conquest without strife.

Rewarding (vice and virtue)  
without words.

Making its appearance without  
call.

Achieving result without obvious  
design.

The Heaven's Net is broad and  
wide.

With big meshes, yet letting  
nothing slip through.

(Cleary)

Boldness in daring means killing;  
boldness in not daring means life.

These two may help and may  
harm.

Who knows the reason for what  
heaven dislikes?

This is why even sages find it  
hard for them.

The Way of heaven wins well  
without contest;

responds without speech,

comes of itself uncalled,

relaxed yet very resourceful.

The net of heaven is vast;  
the holes are large but don't let  
slip.

(Feng&English)

A brave and passionate man will  
kill or be killed.

A brave and calm man will  
always preserve life.

Of these two which is good and  
which is harmful?

Some things are not favored by  
heaven.

Who know why?

Even the sage is unsure of this.

The Tao of heaven does not  
strive, and yet it overcomes.

It does not speak, and yet is  
answered.

It does not ask, yet is supplied  
with all its needs.

It seems to have no aim and yet  
its purpose is fulfilled.

Heaven's net casts wide.

Though its meshes are coarse,  
nothing slips through.

(Waley)

The people are not frightened of death.

What then is the use of trying to intimidate them with the death-penalty?

And even supposing people were generally frightened of death and did not regard it as an everyday thing,

which of you would dare seize them and slay them?

There is the Lord of Slaughter always ready for the task,

and to do it in his stead is like thrusting oneself into the master-carpenter's place and doing his chipping for him.

Now 'he who tries to do the master-carpenter's chipping for him is lucky if he does not cut his hand'.

(Lin)

The people are not afraid of death;

Why threaten them with death?

Supposing that the people *are* afraid of death.

And we can seize and kill the unruly.

Who would dare to do so?

Often it happens that the executioner is killed.

And to take the place of the executioner

Is like handling the hatchet for the master carpenter.

He who handles the hatchet for the master carpenter

Seldom escapes injury to his hands.

(Cleary)

If people usually don't fear death, how can death be used to scare them?

If people are made to fear death, and you can catch and kill them when they act oddly, who would dare?

There are always executioners.

And to kill in place of an executioner

is taking the place of a master carver.

Those who take place of a master carver rarely avoid cutting their own hands.

(Feng&English)

If men are not afraid to die. It is no avail to threaten them with death.

If men live in constant fear of dying.

And if breaking the law means that a man will be killed.

Who will dare to break the law?

There is always an official executioner.

I you try to take his place.

It is like trying to be a master carpenter and cutting wood.

If you try to cut wood like a master carpenter.

you will only hurt your hand.

(Wu)--SEVENTY-FIVE

Why are the people starving?

Because those above them are taxing them too heavily.

That is why they are starving.

Why are the people hard to manage?

Because those above them are fussy and have private ends to serve.

That is why they are hard to manage.

Why do the people make light of death?

Because those above them make too much of life.

That is why they make light of death.

The people have simply nothing to live upon!

They know better than to value such a life!

(Lau)

The people are hungry:

It is because those in authority eat up too much in taxes

That the people are hungry.

The people are difficult to govern:

It is because those in authority are too fond of action

That the people are difficult to govern.

The people treat death lightly:

It is because the people set too much store by life

That they treat death lightly.

It is just because one has no use for life that one is wiser than the man who values life.

(Chan)

The people starve because the ruler eats too much tax-grain.

Therefore they starve.

They are difficult to rule because their ruler does too many things.

Therefore they are difficult to rule.

The people take death lightly because their ruler strives for life too vigorously.

Therefore they take death lightly.

It is only those who do not seek after life that excel in making life valuable.

(Henricks)

The reason why people starve, Is because they take so much in tax-grain.

Therefore they starve.

The reason why the common people cannot be ruled.

Is because their superiors have their reasons for acting.

Therefore they cannot be ruled.

The reason why people take death lightly,

Is because they so avidly seek after life.

Therefore they take death lightly.

Only those who do not act for the purpose of living --

Only these are superior to those who value life.

(Walcy)

The people starve because those above them eat too much tax-grain.

That is the only reason why they starve.

The people are difficult to keep in order because those above them interfere.

That is the only reason why they are so difficult to keep in order.

The people attach no importance to death, because those above them are too grossly absorbed in the pursuit of life.

That is why they attach no importance to death.

And indeed, in that their hearts are so little set on life they are superior to those who set store by life.

(Lin)

When people are hungry.

It is because their rulers eat too much tax-grain.

Therefore the unruliness of hungry people

Is due to the interference of their rulers.

That is why they are unruly.

The people are not afraid of death.

Because they are anxious to make a living.

That is why they are not afraid of death.

It is those who interfere not with their living

That are wise in exalting life.

(Cleary)

When people are starving,  
it is because their governments take too much.

causing them to starve.

When people are hard to control,  
it is because of the contrivances of their governments,

which make them hard to control.

When people slight death,  
it is because of the earnestness with which they seek life;

that makes them slight death.

Only those who do not contrive to live are wise in valuing life.

(Feng&English)

Why are the people starving?  
Because the rulers eat up the money in taxes.

Therefore the people are starving.

Why are the people rebellious?  
Because the rulers interfere too much.

Therefore they are rebellious.

Why do the people think so little of death?

Because the rulers demand too much of life.

Therefore the people take death lightly.

Having little to live on, one knows better than to value life too much.

(Wu)--SEVENTY-SIX

When a man is living, he is soft and supple.

When he is dead, he becomes hard and rigid.

When a plant is living, it is soft and tender.

When it is dead, it becomes withered and dry.

Hence, the hard and rigid belongs to the company of the dead:

The soft and supple belongs to the company of the living.

Therefore, a mighty army tends to fall by its own weight.

Just as dry wood is ready for the axe.

The mighty and great will be laid low;

The humble and weak will be exalted.

(Lau)

A man is supple and weak when living, but hard and stiff when dead.

Grass and trees are pliant and fragile when living, but dried and shriveled when dead.

Thus the hard and the strong are the comrades of death;

the supple and the weak are the comrades of life.

Therefore a weapon that is strong will not vanquish;

A tree that is strong will suffer the axe.

The strong and big takes the lower position,

The supple and weak takes the higher position.

(Chan)

When a man is born, he is tender and weak.

At death, he is stiff and hard.

All things, the grass as well as trees, are tender and supple when alive.

When dead, they are withered and dried.

Therefore the stiff and the hard are companions of death.

The tender and the weak are companions of life.

Therefore if the army is strong, it will not win.

If a tree is stiff, it will break.

The strong and the great are inferior,

while the tender and the weak are superior.

(Henricks)

When people are born, they're supple and soft;

When they die, they end up stretched out firm and rigid.

When the ten thousand things and grasses and trees are alive, they're supple and pliant;

When they're dead, they're withered and dried out.

Therefore we say that the firm and rigid are companions of death.

While the supple, the soft, the weak, and the delicate are companions of life.

If a soldier is rigid, he won't win.

If a tree is rigid, it will come to its end.

Rigidity and power occupy the inferior position;

Suppleness, softness, weakness, and delicateness occupy the superior position.



(Waley)

When he is born, man is soft and weak;

in death he becomes stiff and hard.

The ten thousand creatures and all plants and trees while they are alive are supple and soft.

but when they are dead they become brittle and dry.

Truly, what is stiff and hard is 'a companion of death';

what is soft and weak is a 'companion of life'.

Therefore 'the weapon that is hard will be broken.

the tree that has the hardest wood will be cut down'.

Truly, the hard and mighty are cast down;

the soft and weak set on high.

(Lin)

When man is born, he is tender and weak:

At death, he is hard and stiff.

When things and plants are alive, they are soft and supple;

When they are dead, they are brittle and dry.

Therefore hardness and stiffness are the companions of death.

And softness and gentleness are the companions of life.

Therefore when an army is headstrong, it will lose in battle.

When a tree is hard, it will be cut down.

The big and strong belong underneath.

The gentle and weak belong at the top.

(Cleary)

When people are born they are supple.

and when they die they are stiff.

When trees are born they are tender.

and when they die they are brittle.

Stiffness is thus a companion of death,

flexibility a companion of life.

So when an army is strong,

it does not prevail.

When a tree is strong,

it is cut for use.

So the stiff and the strong are below,

the supple and yielding on top.

(Feng&English)

A man is born gentle and weak.

At his death he is hard and stiff.

Green plants are tender and filled with sap.

At their death they are withered and dry.

Therefore the stiff and unbending is the discipline of death.

The gentle and yielding is the discipline of life.

Thus an army without flexibility never wins a battle.

A tree that is unbending is easily broken.

The hard and strong will fall.

The soft and weak will overcome.

(Wu)--SEVENTY-SEVEN

Perhaps the Way of Heaven may be likened to the stretching of a composite bow!

The upper part is depressed, while the lower is raised.

If the bow-string is too long, it is cut short:

if too short, it is added to.

The Way of Heaven diminishes the more-than-enough to supply the less-than-enough.

The way of man is different: it takes from the less-than-enough to swell the more-than-enough.

Who except a man of the Tao can put his superabundant riches to the service of the world?

Therefore, the Sage does his work without setting any store by it.

accomplishes his task without dwelling upon it.

He does not want his merits to be seen.

(Lau)

Is not the way of heaven like the stretching of a bow?

The high it presses down.

The low it lifts up;

The excessive it takes from.

The deficient it gives to.

It is the way of heaven to take from what has in excess on order to make good what is deficient.

The way of man is otherwise.

It takes from those who are in want in order to offer this to those who already have more than enough.

Who is there that can take what he himself has in excess and offer this to the empire?

Only he who has the way.

Therefore the sage benefits them yet exacts no gratitude,

Accomplishes his task yet lays claim to no merit.

Is this not because he does not wish to be considered a better man than others?

(Chan)

Heaven's Way is indeed like the bending of a bow.

When (the string) is high, bring it down.

When it is low, raise it up.

When it is excessive, reduce it.

When it is insufficient, supplement it.

The Way of Heaven reduces whatever is excessive and supplements whatever is insufficient.

The way of man is different.

It reduces the insufficient to offer to the excessive.

Who is able to have excess to offer the world?

Only the man of Tao.

Therefore the sage acts, but does not rely on his own ability.

He accomplishes his task, but does not claim credit for it.

He has no desire to display his excellence.

(Henricks)

The Way of Heaven is like the flexing of a bow.

The high it presses down; the low it raises up.

From those with a surplus it takes away; to those without enough it adds on.

Therefore the Way of Heaven -- Is to reduce the excessive and increase the insufficient;

The Way of Man --

Is to reduce the insufficient and offer more to the excessive.

Now, who is able to have a surplus and use it to offer to Heaven?

Clearly, it's only the one who possesses the Way.

Therefore the Sage --

Takes actions but does not possess them;

Accomplishes his tasks but does not dwell on them.

Like this, is his desire not to make a display of his worthiness.

(Waley)

Heaven's way is like the bending of a bow.

When a bow is bent the top comes down and the bottom-end comes up.

So too does Heaven take away from those who have too much, and give to those that have not enough.

But if it is Heaven's way to take from those that have too much and give to those who have not enough, this is far from being man's way.

He takes away from those that have not enough in order to make offering to those who already have too much.

One there is and one only, so rich that he can afford to make offerings to all under heaven.

Who is this?

It is the possessor of Tao.

If, then, the Sage 'though he controls does not lean,

and when he has achieved his aim does not linger',

it is because he does not wish to reveal himself as better than others.

(Lin)

The Tao of Heaven.

Is it not like the bending of a bow?

The top comes down and the bottom-end goes up.

The extra (length) is shortened, the insufficient (width) is expanded.

It is the Way of Heaven to take away from those that have too much

And give to those than have not enough.

Not so with man's way:

He takes away from those that have not

And gives it as tribute to those that have too much.

Who can have enough and to spare to give to the entire world?

Only the man of Tao.

Therefore the Sage acts, but does not possess.

Accomplishes but lays claim to no credit.

Because he has no wish to seem superior.

(Cleary)

The Way of heaven is like drawing a bow:

the high is lowered, the low is raised;

excess is reduced, need is fulfilled.

The Way of heaven reduces excess and fills need,

but the way of man is not so: they strip the needy to serve those who have too much.

(Feng&English)

The Tao of heaven is like the bending of a bow.

The high is lowered, and the low is raised.

If the string is too long, it is shortened;

If there is not enough, it is made longer.

The Tao of heaven is to take from those who have too much and give to those who do not have enough.

Man's way is different.

He takes from those who do not have enough to give to those who already have too much.

What man has more than enough and gives it to the world?

Only the man of Tao.

Therefore the sage works without recognition.

He achieves what has to be done without dwelling on it.

He does not try to show his knowledge.

(Wu)--SEVENTY-EIGHT

Nothing in the world is softer and weaker than water;

But, for attacking the hard and strong, there is nothing like it!

For nothing can take its place.

That the weak overcomes the strong, and the soft overcomes the hard.

This is something known by all, but practiced by none.

Therefore, the Sage says:

To receive the dirt of a country is to be the lord of its soil-shrines.

To bear the calamities of a country is to be the prince of the world.

Indeed, Truth sounds like its opposite!

(Lau)

In the world there is nothing more submissive and weak than water.

Yet for attacking that which is hard and strong nothing can surpass it.

This is because there is nothing that can take its place.

That the weak overcomes the strong,

And the submissive overcomes the hard,

Everyone in the world knows yet no one can put this knowledge into practice.

Therefore the sage says,

One who takes on himself the humiliation of the state

Is called a ruler worthy of offering sacrifices to the gods of earth and millet;

One who takes on himself the calamity of the state

Is called a king worthy of dominion over the entire empire.

Straightforward words  
Seem paradoxical.

(Chan)

There is nothing softer and weaker than water.

And yet there is nothing better for attacking hard and strong things.

For this reason there is no substitute for it.

All the world knows that the weak overcomes the strong and the soft overcomes the hard.

But none can practice it.

Therefore the sage says:

He who suffers disgrace for his country

Is called the lord of the land.

He who takes upon himself the country's misfortunes

Becomes the king of the empire.

Straight words seem to be their opposite.

(Henricks)

In the whole world, nothing is softer and weaker than water.

And yet for attacking the hard and strong, nothing can beat it.

Because there is nothing you can use to replace it.

That water can defeat the unyielding --

That the weak can defeat the strong --

There is no one in the world who doesn't know it,

And yet there is no one who can put it into practice.

For this reason, the words of the Sage say:

To take on yourself the disgrace of the state -- this is called being the lord of the altars of earth and grain;

To assume responsibility for all ill-omened events in the state -- this is called being the king of the world.

Correct words seem to say the reverse of what you expect them to say.

(Waley)

Nothing under heaven is softer or  
more yielding than water;

but when it attacks things hard  
and resistant there is not one of  
them that can prevail.

For they can find no way of  
altering it.

That the yielding conquers the  
resistant and the soft conquers the  
hard is a fact known by all men,  
yet utilized by none.

Yet it is in reference to this that  
the Sage said 'Only he who has  
accepted the dirt of the country can  
be lord of its soil-shrines;

only he who takes upon himself  
the evils of the country can become  
a king among those who dwell  
under heaven.'

Straight words seem crooked.

(Lin)

There is nothing weaker than  
water

But none is superior to it in  
overcoming the hard.

For which there is no substitute.

That weakness overcomes  
strength

And gentleness overcomes  
rigidity.

No one does not know;

No one can put into practice.

Therefore the Sage says:

"Who receives unto himself the  
calumny of the world

Is the preserver of the state.

Who bears himself the sins of the  
world

Is the king of the world."

Straight words seem crooked.

(Cleary)

Nothing in the world is more  
flexible and yielding than water.

Yet when it attacks the firm and  
the strong.

none can withstand it.

because they have no why to  
change it.

So the flexible overcome the  
adamant,

the yielding overcome the  
forceful.

Everyone know this.

but no one can do it.

This is why sages say

those who can take on the  
disgrace of nations

are leaders of lands;

those who can take on the

misfortune of nations

are rulers of the world.

True sayings seem paradoxical.

(Feng&English)

Under heaven nothing is more  
soft and yielding than water.

Yet for attacking the solid and  
strong, nothing is better:

It has no equal.

The weak can overcome the  
strong;

The supple can overcome the  
stiff.

Under heaven everyone knows  
this.

Yet no one puts it into practice.

Therefore the sage says:

He who takes upon himself the  
humiliation of the people is fit to  
rule them.

He who takes upon himself the  
country's disasters deserves to be  
king of the universe.

The truth often sounds  
paradoxical.

(Wu)--SEVENTY-NINE

When a great wound is healed,  
There will still remain a scar.  
Can this be a desirable state of  
affairs?

Therefore, the Sage, holding the  
left-hand tally,

Performs his part of the  
covenant,

But lays no claim upon others.  
The virtuous attends to his  
duties;

The virtueless knows only to levy  
duties upon the people.

The Way of Heaven has no  
private affections.

But always accords with the  
good.

(Lau)

When peace is made between  
great enemies,

Some enmity is bound to remain  
undispelled.

How can this be considered  
perfect?

Therefore the sage takes the left-  
hand tally, but exacts no payment  
from the people.

The man of virtue takes charge  
of the tally;

The man of no virtue takes  
charge of exaction.

It is the way of heaven to show  
no favoritism.

It is for ever on the side of the  
good man.

(Chan)

To patch up great hatred is  
surely to leave some hatred behind.

How can this be regarded as  
good?

Therefore the sage keeps the left-  
hand portion (obligation) of a  
contract

And does not blame the other  
party.

Virtuous people attend to their  
left-hand portions.

While those without virtue attend  
to other people's mistakes.

"The Way of Heaven has no  
favorites.

It is always with the good man."

(Henricks)

To make peace where there has  
been great resentment,

there is bound to be resentment  
left over.

How could this be regarded as  
good?

Therefore the Sage holds the  
right tally yet makes no demands  
of others.

For this reason, those who have  
virtue are in charge of the tally;

Those without virtue are in  
charge of the taxes.

The Way of Heaven has no  
favorites,

It's always with the good man.

(Walcy)

To allay the main discontent, but only in a manner that will certainly produce further discontents can hardly be called successful.

Therefore the Sage behaves like the holder of the left-hand tally,

who stays where he is and does not go round making claims on people.

For he who has the 'power' of Tao is the Grand Almoner;

he who has not the 'power' is the Grand Perquisitor.

'It is Heaven's way, without distinction of persons, to keep the good perpetually supplied.'

(Lin)

Patching up a great hatred is sure to leave some hatred behind.

How can this be regarded as satisfactory?

Therefore the Sage holds the left tally.

And do not put the guilt on the other party.

The virtuous man is for patching up;

The vicious is for fixing guilt.

But "the way of Heaven is impartial

It sides with only with the good man."

(Cleary)

When you harmonize bitter enemies,

yet resentment is sure to linger, how can this be called good?

Therefore sages keep their faith and do not pressure others.

So the virtuous sees to their promises,

while the virtueless look after precedents.

The Way of heaven is impersonal;

it is always with good people.

(Feng&English)

After a bitter quarrel, some resentment must remain.

What can one do about it?

Therefore the sage keeps his half of the bargain

But does not exact his due.

A man of Virtue performs his part.

But a man without Virtue requires others to fulfill their obligations.

The Tao of heaven is impartial.

It stays with good men all the time.

(Wu)--EIGHTY

Ah, for a small country with a small population!

Though there are highly efficient mechanical contrivances, the people have no use for them.

Let them mind death and refrain from migrating to distant places.

Boats and carriages, weapons and armour there may still be, but there are no occasions for using or displaying them.

Let the people revert to communication by knotting cords.

See to it that they are contented with their food, pleased with their clothing, satisfied with their houses, and inured to their simple ways of living.

Though there may be another country in the neighbourhood so close that they are within sight of each other and the crowing of cocks and barking of dogs in one place can be heard in the other, yet there is no traffic between them, and throughout their lives the two people have nothing to do with each other.

(Lau)

Reduce the size and population of the state.

Ensure that even though the people have tools of war for a troop or a battalion they will not use them;

and also that they will be reluctant to move to distant places because they look on death as no light matter.

Even when they have ships and carts, they will have no use for them;

and even when they have armour and weapons, they will have no occasion to make a show of them.

Bring it about that the people will return to the use of the knotted rope,

Will find relish in their food  
And beauty in their clothes,

Will be content in their abode  
And happy in the way they live.

Though adjoining states are within site of one another, and the sound of dogs barking and cocks crowing in one state can be heard in another,

yet the people of one state will grow old and die without having had any dealing with those of another.

(Chan)

Let there be a small country with few people.

Let there be ten times and a hundred times as many utensils

But let them not be used.

Let the people value their lives highly and not migrate far.

Even if there are ships and carriages, none will ride in them.

Even if there are armor and weapons, none will display them.

Let the people again knot cords and use them (in place of writing).

Let them relish their food, beautify their clothing, be content with their homes, and delight in their customs.

Though neighboring communities overlook one another and the crowing of cocks and barking of dogs can be heard,

Yet the people there may grow old and die without ever visiting one another.

(Henricks)

Let the states be small and the people few --

Bring it about that there are weapons for "tens" and "hundreds," yet let no one use them;

Have the people regard death gravely and put migrating far from their minds.

Though they might have boats and carriages, no one will ride them;

Though they might have armour and spears, no one will display them.

Have the people return to knotting cords and using them.

They will relish their food,  
Regard their clothing as beautiful,

Delight in their customs,

And feel safe and secure in their homes.

Neighboring states might overlook one another,

And the sounds of chickens and dogs might be overheard.

Yet the people will arrive at old age and death with no comings and goings between them.



(Waley)

Given a small country with few inhabitants.

he could bring it about that though there should be among the people contrivances requiring ten times, a hundred times less labour, they would not use them.

He could bring it about that the people would be ready to lay down their lives and lay them down again in defense of their homes, rather than emigrate.

There might still be boats and carriages, but no one would go in them;

there might still be weapons of war but no one would drill with them.

He could bring it about that 'the people should have no use for any form of writing save knotted ropes, should be contented with their food, pleased with their clothing, satisfied with their homes, should take pleasure in their rustic tasks.

The next place might be so near at hand that one could hear the cocks crowing in it, the dogs barking;

but the people would grow old and die without ever having been there'.

(Lin)

(Let there be) a small country with a small population.

Where the supply of goods are tenfold or hundredfold, more than they can use.

Let the people value their lives and not migrate far.

Though there be boats and carriages.

None be there to ride them.

Though there be armor and weapons.

No occasion to display them.

Let the people again tie ropes for reckoning,

Let them enjoy their food,

Beautify their clothing,

Be satisfied with their homes,

Delight in their customs.

The neighboring settlements overlook one another

So that they can hear the barking of dogs and crowing of cocks of their neighbors.

And the people till the end of their days shall never have been outside their country.

(Cleary)

A small state has few people.

It has the people keep arms but not use them.

It has them regard death gravely and not go on distant campaigns.

Even if they have vehicles, they have nowhere to drive them.

Even if they have weapons, they have nowhere to use them.

It has the people go back to simple techniques,

relish their food,

like their clothes,

be comfortable in their ways,

and enjoy their work.

Neighboring state may be so close they can hear each other's dogs and roosters,

but they make it so that the

people have never gone back and forth.

(Feng&English)

A small country has fewer people.

Though there are machines that can work ten to a hundred times faster than man, they are not needed.

The people take death seriously and do not travel far.

Though they have boats and carriages, no one uses them.

Though they have armor and weapons, no one displays them.

Men return to the knotting of rope in place of writing.

Their food is plain and good, their clothes fine but simple, their homes secure;

They are happy in their ways.

Though they live within sight of their neighbors,

And crowing cocks and barking dogs are heard across the way,

Yet they leave each other in peace while they grow old and die.

(Wu)--EIGHTY-ONE

Sincere words are not sweet.  
Sweet words are not sincere.  
Good men are not argumentative.  
The argumentative are not good.  
The wise are not erudite.  
The erudite are not wise.  
The Sage does not take to  
hoarding.  
The more he lives for others, the  
fuller his life.  
The more he gives, the more he  
abounds.  
The Way of Heaven is to benefit,  
not to harm.  
The Way of the Sage is to do his  
duty, not strive with anyone.

(Lau)

Truthful words are not beautiful;  
beautiful words are not truthful.  
Good words are not persuasive;  
persuasive words are not good.  
He who knows has no wide  
learning;  
he who has wide learning does  
not know.  
The sage does not hoard.  
Having bestowed all he has on  
others, he is richer still.  
The way of heaven benefits and  
does not harm;  
the way of the sage is bountiful  
and does not contend.

(Chan)

True words are not beautiful;  
Beautiful words are not true.  
A good man does not argue;  
He who argues is not a good  
man.  
A wise man has not extensive  
knowledge;  
He who has extensive knowledge  
is not a wise man.  
The sage does not accumulate for  
himself.  
The more he uses for others, the  
more he has himself.  
The more he gives to others, the  
more he possesses of his own.  
The Way of Heaven is to benefit  
others and not to injure.  
The way of the sage is to act but  
not compete.

(Henricks)

Sincere words are not showy;  
Showy words are not sincere.  
Those who know are not "widely  
learned";  
Those "widely learned" do not  
know.  
The good do not have a lot;  
Those with a lot are not good.  
The Sage accumulates nothing.  
Having used what he had for  
others,  
He has even more.  
Having given what he had to  
others,  
What he has is even greater.  
Therefore, the Way of Heaven is  
to benefit and not cause harm;  
The Way of Man is to act on  
behalf of others and not compete  
with them.

(Waley)

True words are not fine  
sounding;

Fine-sounding words are not  
true.

The good man does not prove by  
argument;

And he who proves by argument  
is not good.

True wisdom is different from  
much learning;

Much learning makes little  
wisdom.

The Sage has no need to hoard;

When his own last scrap has  
been used up on behalf of others,

Lo, he has more than before!

When his own last scrap has  
been used up giving to others,

Lo, his stock is even greater than  
before!

For Heaven's way is to sharpen  
without cutting,

And the Sage's way is to act  
without striving.

(Lin)

True words are not fine-  
sounding;

Fine-sounding words are not  
true.

A good man does not argue;

He who argues is not a good  
man.

The wise one does not know  
many things;

He who knows many things is  
not wise.

The Sage does not accumulate  
(for himself);

He lives for other people,

And grows richer himself;

He gives to other people,

And has greater abundance.

The Tao of Heaven

Blesses, but does not harm.

The Way of the Sage

Accomplishes, but does not  
contend.

(Cleary)

True words are not beautiful,  
beautiful words are not true.

The good are not argumentative,  
the argumentative are not good.

Knowers do not generalize,

generalists do not know.

Sages do not accumulate

anything

but give everything to others,

having more the more they give.

The Way of heaven

helps and does not harm.

The Way for humans is to act  
without contention.

(Feng&English)

Truthful words are not beautiful,

Beautiful words are not truthful.

Good men do not argue.

Those who argue are not good.

Those who know are not learned.

The learned do not know.

The sage never tries to store  
things up.

The more he does for others, the  
more he has.

The more he gives to others, the  
greater his abundance.

The Tao of heaven is pointed but  
does no harm.

The Tao if the sage is work  
without effort.