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The Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu

Ma-wang-tui version

Translated by Robert G. Henricks, 1989

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1

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

2. As for names, the name that can be named is not the constant name.

3. ameless is the beginning of the ten thousand things;

4. amed is the mother of the ten thousand things.

5. Therefore, those constantly without desires, by this means will perceive its subtlety.
6. Those constantly with desires, by this means will see only that which they yearn for and seek.
7. These two together emerge;
8. They have different names yet they're called the same;
9. That which is even more profound than the profound—
10. The gateway of all subtleties.

2

1. When everyone in the world knows the beautiful as beautiful, ugliness comes into being;
2. When everyone knows the good, then the not good comes to be.
3. The mutual production of being and nonbeing,
4. The mutual completion of difficult and easy,
5. The mutual formation of long and short,
6. The mutual filling of high and low,
7. The mutual harmony of tone and voice,
8. The mutual following of front and back—
9. These are all constants.

10. Therefore the Sage dwells in nonactive affairs and practices the wordless teaching.
11. The ten thousand things arise, but he doesn't begin them;
12. He acts on their behalf, but he doesn't make them dependent;
13. He accomplishes his tasks, but he doesn't dwell on them;
14. It is only because he doesn't dwell on them, that they therefore do not leave them.

3

1. By not elevating the worthy, you bring it about that people will not compete.
2. By not valuing goods that are hard to obtain, you bring it about that people will not act like thieves.
3. By not displaying the desirable you bring it about that people will not be confused.
4. Therefore, in the government of the Sage:
5. He empties their minds,
6. And fills their bellies.
7. Weakens their ambition,
8. And strengthens their bones.
9. He constantly causes the people to be without knowledge and without desires.
10. If he can bring it about that those with knowledge simply do not dare to act,
11. Then there is nothing that will not be in order.

4

1. The Way is empty;
2. Yet when you use it, you never need fill it again.
3. Like an abyss! It seems to be the ancestor of the ten thousand things.
4. It files down sharp edges;
5. Unties the tangles;
6. Softens the glare;
7. Settles the dust.

8. Submerged! It seems perhaps to exist.
9. We don't know whose child it is;
10. It seems to have [even] preceded the Lord.

5

1. Heaven and Earth are not humane;
 2. They regard the the thousand things as straw dogs.
 3. The Sage is not humane;
 4. He regards the common people as straw dogs.
-
5. The space between Heaven and Earth—is it not like a bellow?
 6. It is empty and yet not depleted;
 7. Move it and more [always] comes out.
 8. Much learning means frequent exhaustions.
 9. That's not so good as holding on to the mean.

6

1. The valley spirit never dies;
2. We call it the mysterious female.
3. The gates of the mysterious female—
4. These we call the roots of Heaven and Earth.
5. Subtle yet everlasting! It seems to exist.
6. In being used, it is not exhausted.

7

1. Heaven endures; Earth lasts a long time.
 2. The reason why Heaven and Earth can endure and last a long time—
 3. Is that they do not live for themselves.
 4. Therefore they can long endure.
-
5. Therefore the Sage:
 6. Puts himself in the background yet finds himself in the foreground;
 7. Puts self-concern out of [his mind], yet finds self-concern in the fore;
 8. Puts self-concern out of [his mind], yet finds that his self-concern is preserved.
 9. Is it not because he has no self-interest,
 10. That he is therefore able to realize his self-interest?

8

1. The highest good is like water;
 2. Water is good at benefiting the ten thousand things and yet it [does not] compete [with them].
 3. It dwells in places the masses of people detest,
 4. Therefore it is close to the Way.
-
5. In dwelling, the good thing is the land;
 6. In the mind, the good thing is depth;
 7. In giving, the good thing is [being like] Heaven;
 8. In speaking, the good thing is sincerity;
 9. In governing, the good thing is order;
 10. In acting, the good thing is ability;
 11. In activity, the good thing is timeliness.

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

9

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

10

1. In nourishing the soul and embracing the One—can you do it without letting them leave?
2. In concentrating your breath and making it soft—can you [make it like that of] a child?
3. In cultivating and cleaning your profound mirror—can you do it so that it has no blemish?
4. In loving the people and giving life to the state—can you do it without using knowledge?
5. In opening and closing the gates of Heaven—can you play the part of the female?
6. In understanding all within the four reaches—can you do it without using knowledge?
7. Give birth to them and nourish them.
8. Give birth to them but don't try to own them;
9. Help them to grow but don't rule them.
10. This is called Profound Virtue.

11

1. Thirty spokes unite in one hub;
2. It is precisely where there is nothing, that we find the usefulness of the wheel.
3. We fire clay and make vessels;
4. It is precisely where there's no substance, that we find the usefulness of clay pots.
5. We chisel out doors and windows;
6. It is precisely in these empty spaces, that we find the usefulness of the room.
7. Therefore, we regard having something as beneficial;
8. But having nothing as useful.

12

1. The five colors cause one's eyes to go blind.
2. Racing horses and hunting cause one's mind to go mad.
3. Goods that are hard to obtain pose an obstacle to one's travels.
4. The five flavors confuse one's palate.
5. The five tones cause one's ears to go deaf.
6. Therefore, in the government of the Sage:
7. He's for the belly and not for the eyes.
8. Thus he rejects that and take this.

1:

1. "regard favor and disgrace with alarm."

2. "Respect great distress as you do your own person."
3. What do I mean I say "Regard favor and disgrace with alarm"?
4. Favor is inferior.
5. If you get it—be alarmed!
6. If you lose it—be alarmed!
7. This is what I mean when I say "Regard favor and disgrace with alarm."
8. What do I mean when I say "Respect great distress as you do your own person"?
9. The reason why I have distress
10. Is that I have a body.
11. If I had no body, what distress would I have?
12. Therefore, to one who values acting for himself over acting on behalf of the world,
13. You can entrust the world.
14. And to one who in being parsimonious regards his person as equal to the world,
15. You can turn over the world.

14

1. We look at it but do not see it;
2. We name this "the minute."
3. We listen to it but do not hear it;
4. We name this "the rarefied."
5. We touch it but do not hold it;
6. We name this "the level and smooth."
7. These three cannot be examined to the limit.
8. Thus they merge together as one.
9. "One"—there is nothing more encompassing above it,
10. And nothing smaller below it.
11. Boundless, formless! It cannot be named,
12. And returns to the state of no-thing.
13. This is called the formless form,
14. The substanceless image.
15. This is called the subtle and indistinct.
16. Follow it and you won't see its back;
17. Greet it and you won't see its head.
18. Hold on to the Way of the present—
19. To manage the things of the present,
20. And to know the ancient beginning.
21. This is called the beginning of the thread of the Way.

15

1. The one who was skilled at practicing the Way in antiquity,
2. Was subtle and profound, mysterious and penetratingly wise.
3. His depth cannot be known.
4. It is only because he cannot be known
5. That therefore were I forced to describe him I'd say:
6. Hesitant was he! Like someone crossing a river in winter.
7. Undecided was he! As though in fear of his neighbors on all four sides.
8. Solemn and polite was he! Like a guest.
9. Melted and dispersed was he! Like an ice as it melts
10. Unrefined, unformed was he! Like uncarved wood.

11. Merged, undifferentiated was he! Like muddy water.
12. Broad and expansive was he! Like a valley.
13. If you take muddy water and still it, it gradually becomes clear.
14. If you bring something to rest in order to move it, it gradually comes alive.
15. The one who preserved this Way does not desire to be full;
16. Therefore he can wear out with no need to be renewed.

16

1. Take emptiness to the limit;
2. Maintain tranquility in the center.
3. The ten thousand things—side-by-side they arise;
4. And by this I see their return.
5. Things [come forth] in great numbers;
6. Each one returns to its root.
7. This is called tranquility.
8. "Tranquility"—This means to return to your fate.
9. To return to your fate is to be constant;
10. To know the constant is to be wise.
11. Not to know the constant is to be reckless and wild;
12. If you're reckless and wild, your actions will lead to misfortune.
13. To know the constant is to be all-embracing;
14. To be all-embracing is to be impartial;
15. To be impartial is to be kingly;
16. To be kingly is to be [like] Heaven;
17. To be [like] Heaven is to be [one with] the Dao;
18. If you're [one with] the Dao, to the end of your days you'll suffer no harm.

17

1. With the highest [kind of rulers], those below simply know they exist.
2. With those one step down—they love and praise them.
3. With those one further step down—they fear them.
4. And with those at the bottom—they ridicule and insult them.
5. When trust is insufficient, there will be no trust [in them].
6. Hesitant, undecided! Like this is his respect for speaking.

18

1. Therefore, when the Great Way is rejected, it is then that we have the virtues of humanity and righteousness;
2. When knowledge and wisdom appear, it is then that there is great hypocrisy;
3. When the six relations are not in harmony, it is then that we have filial piety and compassion;
4. And when the country is in chaos and confusion, it is then that there are virtuous officials.

19

1. Eliminate sageliness, throw away knowledge,
2. he people will benefit a hundredfold.
3. ate humanity, throw away righteousness,
4. And the people will return to filial piety and compassion.

5. Eliminate craftiness, throw away profit,
6. Then we will have no robbers and thieves.
7. These three sayings—
8. Regard as a text are not yet complete.
9. Thus, we must see to it that they have the following appended:

10. Manifest plainness and embrace the genuine;
11. Lessen self-interest and make few your desires;
12. Eliminate learning and have no undue concern.

20

1. Agreement and angry rejection;
2. How great is the difference between them?
3. Beautiful and ugly;
4. What's it like—the difference between them?
5. The one who is feared by others,
6. Must also because of this fear other men.
7. Wild, unrestrained! It will never come to an end!
8. The multitudes are peaceful and happy;
9. Like climbing a terrace in springtime to feast at the tai-lao sacrifice.
10. But I'm tranquil and quiet—not yet having given any sign.
11. Like a child who has not yet smiled.
12. Tired and exhausted—as though I have no place to return.
13. The multitudes all have a surplus.
- [13a. I alone seem to be lacking.]
14. Mine is the mind of a fool—ignorant and stupid!
15. The common people see things clearly;
16. I alone am in the dark.
17. The common people discriminate and make fine distinctions;
18. I alone am muddled and confused.
19. Formless am I! Like the ocean;
20. Shapeless am I! As though I have nothing in which I can rest.
21. The masses all have their reasons [for acting];
22. I alone am stupid and obstinate like a rustic.
23. But my desires alone differ from those of others—
24. For I value drawing sustenance from the Mother.

21

1. The character of great virtue follows alone from the Way.
2. As for the nature of the Way—it's shapeless and formless.
3. Formless! Shapeless! Inside there are images.
4. Shapeless! Formless! Inside there are things.
5. Hidden! Obscure! Inside there are essences.
6. These essences are very real;
7. Inside them is the proof.
8. From the present back to the past,
9. Its name has never gone away.
10. By this that we comply with the father of the multitude [of things].
11. do I know that the father of the multitude is so?
12. By this.

22

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

23

1. To rarely speak—such is [the way of] Nature.
 2. Fierce winds don't last the whole morning;
 3. Torrential rains don't last the whole day.
 4. Who makes these things?
 5. If even Heaven and Earth can't make these last long—
 6. How much the more is this true for man?!
-
7. Therefore, one who devotes himself to the Way is one with the Way;
 8. One who [devotes himself to] Virtue is one with that Virtue;
 9. And one who [devotes himself to] losing is one with that loss.
 10. To the one who is one with Virtue, the Way also gives Virtue;
 11. While for the one who is one with his loss, the Way also disregards him.

24

1. One who boasts is not established;
 2. One who shows himself off does not become prominent;
 3. One who puts himself on display does not brightly shine;
 4. One who brags about himself gets no credit;
 5. One who praises himself does not long endure.
-
6. In the Way, such things are called:
 7. "Surplus food and redundant action."
 8. And with things—there are those who hate them.
 9. Therefore, the one with the Way in them does not dwell.

25

1. There was something formed out of chaos,
2. That was born before Heaven and Earth.
3. and Still! Pure and deep!
4. nds on its own and does not change.
5. It can be regarded as the mother of Heaven and Earth.

6. I do not yet know its name:
7. I "style" it "the Way."
8. Were I forced to give it a name, I would call it "the Great."
9. "Great" means "to depart";
10. "To depart" means "to be far away";
11. And "to be far away" means "to return."
12. The Way is great;
13. Heaven is great;
14. Earth is great;
15. And the king is also great.
16. In the country there are four greats, and the king occupies one place among them.
17. Man models himself on the Earth;
18. The Earth models itself on Heaven;
19. Heaven models itself on the Way;
20. And the Way models itself on that which is so on its own.

26

1. The heavy is the root of the light;
2. Tranquility is the lord of agitation.
3. Therefore the gentleman, in traveling all day, does not get far away from his luggage carts.
4. When he's safely inside a walled-in [protected] hostel and resting at ease—only then does he transcend all concern.
5. How can the king of ten thousand chariots treat his own person more lightly than the whole world?!
6. If you regard things too lightly, then you lose the basic;
7. If you're agitated, you lose the "lord."

27

1. The good traveler leaves no track behind;
2. The good speaker [speaks] without blemish or flaw;
3. The good counter doesn't use tallies or chips;
4. The good closer of doors does so without bolt or lock, and yet the door cannot be opened;
5. The good tier of knots ties without rope or cord, yet his knots can't be undone.
6. Therefore the Sage is constantly good at saving men and never rejects anyone;
7. And with things, he never rejects useful goods.
8. This is called Doubly Bright.
9. Therefore the good man is the teacher of the good,
10. And the bad man is the raw material for the good.
11. To not value one's teacher and not cherish the raw goods—
12. Though one had great knowledge, he would still be greatly confused.
13. This is called the Essential of the Sublime.

28

1. you know the male yet hold on to the female,
2. be the ravine of the country.

3. When you're the ravine of the country,
4. Your constant virtue will not leave.
5. And when your constant virtue doesn't leave,
6. You'll return to the state of the infant.

7. When you know the pure yet hold on to the soiled,
8. You'll be the valley of the country.
9. When you're the valley of the country,
10. Your constant virtue is complete.
11. And when your constant virtue is complete,
12. You'll return to the state of uncarved wood.

13. When you know the white yet hold on to the black,
14. You'll be the model for the country.
15. And when you're the model for the country,
16. Your constant virtue will not go astray.
17. And when your constant virtue does not go astray,
18. You'll return to the condition which has no limit.

19. When uncarved wood is cut up, it's turned into vessels;
20. When the Sage is used, he becomes the Head of Officials.
21. Truly, great carving is done without splitting up.

29

1. For those who would like to take control of the world and act on it—
 2. I see that with this they simply will not succeed.
 3. The world is a sacred vessel;
 4. It is not something that can be acted upon.
 5. Those who act on it destroy it;
 6. Those who hold on to it lose it.
7. With things—some go forward, others follow;
 8. Some are hot, others submissive and weak;
 9. Some rise up while others fall down.
 10. Therefore the Sage:
 11. Rejects the extreme, the excessive, and the extravagant.

30

1. Those who assist their rulers with the Way,
 2. Don't use weapons to commit violence in the world.
 3. Such deeds easily rebound.
 4. In places where armies are stationed, thorns and brambles will grow.
 5. The good [general] achieves his result and that's all;
 6. He does not use the occasion to seize strength from it.
7. He achieves his result but does not become arrogant;
 8. He achieves his result but does not praise his deeds;
 9. He achieves his result and yet does not brag.
 10. He achieves his result, yet he abides with the result because he has no choice.
 11. This is called achieving one's result [without] using force.

12. In things reach their primes, they get old;
13. we called this "not the Way."

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

31

1. As for weapons—they are instruments of ill omen.
2. And among things there are those that hate them.
3. Therefore, the one who has the Way, with them does not dwell.
4. When the gentleman is at home, he honors the left;
5. When at war, he honors the right.
6. Therefore, weapons are not the instrument of the gentleman—
7. Weapons are instruments of ill omen.
8. When you have no choice but to use them, it's best to remain tranquil and calm.
9. You should never look upon them as things of beauty.
10. If you see them as beautiful things—this is to delight in the killing of men.
11. And when you delight in the killing of men, you'll not realize your goal in the land.
12. Therefore, in happy events we honor the left,
13. But in mourning we honor the right.
14. Therefore, the lieutenant general stands on the left;
15. And the supreme general stands on the right.
16. Which is to say, they arrange themselves as they would at a funeral.
17. When multitudes of people are killed, we stand before them in sorrow and grief.
18. When we're victorious in battle, we treat the occasion like a funeral ceremony.

32

1. The Dao is constantly nameless.
2. Though in its natural state it seems small, no one in the world dares to treat it as a subject.
3. Were marquises and kings able to maintain it,
4. The ten thousand things would submit to them on their own,
5. And Heaven and Earth would unite to send forth sweet dew.
6. By nature it would fall equally on all things, with no one among the people ordering that it be so.
7. As soon as we start to establish a system, we have names.
8. And as soon as there are set names,
9. Then you must also know that it's time to stop.
10. By knowing to stop—in this way you'll come to no harm.
11. The Way's presence in the world
12. Is like the relationship of small valley [streams] to rivers and seas.

33

1. To understand others is to be knowledgeable;
2. To understand yourself is to be wise.
3. To conquer others is to have strength;
4. To conquer yourself is to be strong.
5. To know when you have enough is to be rich.
6. To go forward with strength is to have ambition.
7. To not lose your place is to last long.
8. To die but not be forgotten—that's [true] long life.

34

1. /ay floats and drifts;
2. It can go left or right.

3. It accomplishes its tasks and completes its affairs, and yet for this it is not given a name.
 4. The ten thousand things entrust their lives to it, and yet it does not act as their master.
 5. Thus it is constantly without desires.
 6. It can be named with the things that are small.
 7. The ten thousand things entrust their lives to it, and yet it does not not act as their master.
 8. It can be named with the things that are great.
9. Therefore the Sage's ability to accomplish the great
 10. Comes from his not playing the role of the great.
 11. Therefore he is able to accomplish the great.

35

1. Hold on to the Great Image and the whole world will come to you.
2. Come to you and suffer no harm; but rather know great safety and peace.
3. Music and food—for these passing travelers stop.
4. Therefore, of the Dao's speaking, we say:
5. Insipid, it is! It's lack of flavor.
6. When you look at it, it's not sufficient to be seen;
7. When you listen to it, it's not sufficient to be heard;
8. Yet when you use it, it can't be used up.

36

1. If you wish to shrink it,
2. You must certainly stretch it.
3. If you wish to weaken it,
4. You must certainly strengthen it.
5. If you wish to desert it,
6. You must certainly work closely with it.
7. If you wish to snatch something from it,
8. You must certainly give something to it.
9. This is called the Subtle Light.
10. The submissive and weak conquer the strong.
11. Fish should not be taken out of the depths;
12. The state's sharp weapons should not be shown to the people.

37

1. The Dao is constantly nameless.
 2. Were Marquises and kings able to maintain it,
 3. The ten thousand things would transform on their own.
 4. Having transformed, were their desires to become active,
 5. I would subdue them with the nameless simplicity.
 6. Having subdued them with the nameless simplicity,
 7. I would not disgrace them.
 8. By not being disgraced, they will be tranquil.
 9. And Heaven and Earth will of themselves be correct and right.
10. The Way—2,426 [characters]

1. The highest virtue is not virtuous; therefore it truly has virtue.
2. The lowest virtue never loses sight of its virtue; therefore it has no true virtue.
3. The highest virtue takes no action, yet it has no reason for acting this way;
4. The highest humanity takes action, yet it has no reason for acting this way;
5. The highest righteousness takes action, and it has its reason for acting this way;
6. The highest propriety takes action, and when no one responds to it, then it angrily rolls up its sleeves and forces people to comply.
7. Therefore, when the Way is lost, only then do we have virtue;
8. When virtue is lost, only then do we have humanity;
9. When humanity is lost, only then do we have righteousness;
10. And when righteousness is lost, only then do we have propriety.
11. As for propriety, it's but the thin edge of loyalty and sincerity, and the beginning of disorder.
12. And foreknowledge is but the flower of the Way, and the beginning of stupidity.
13. Therefore the Great Man
14. Dwells in the thick and doesn't dwell in the thin;
15. Dwells in the fruit and doesn't dwell in the flower.
16. Therefore, he rejects that and takes this.

39

1. Of those in the past that attained the One—
2. Heaven, by attaining the One became clear;
3. Earth, by attaining the One became stable;
4. Gods, by attaining the One became divine;
5. Valley, by attaining the One became full;
6. Marquises and kings, by attaining the One made the whole land ordered and secure.
7. Taking this to its logical conclusion we would say—
8. If Heaven were not by means of it clear, it would, I'm afraid, shatter;
9. If the Earth were not by means of it stable, it would, I'm afraid, let go.
10. If the gods were not by means of it divine, they would, I'm afraid, be powerless.
11. If valley were not by means of it full, they would, [I'm afraid,] dry up.
12. And if marquises and kings were not by means of it noble and high, they would, I'm afraid, topple and fall.
13. Therefore, it must be the case that the noble has the base as its root;
14. And it must be the case that the high has the low for its foundation.
15. Thus, for this reason, marquises and kings call themselves "The Orphan," "The Widower," and "The One Without Grain."
16. This is taking the base as one's root, is it not?!
17. Therefore, they regard their large numbers of carriages as having no carriage.
18. And because of this, they desire not to dazzle and glitter like jade,
19. But to remain firm and strong like stone.

40

1. "Reversal" is the movement of the Dao;
2. "Kness" is the function of the Dao.

3. The things of the world originate in being,
4. And being originates in nonbeing.

41

1. When the highest type of men hear the Way, with diligence they're able to practice it;
 2. When the average men hear the Way, some things they retain and others they lose;
 3. When the lowest type of men hear the Way, they laugh out loud at it.
 4. If they didn't laugh at it, it couldn't be regarded as the Way.
-
5. Therefore, there is a set saying about this that goes:
 6. The bright Way appears to be dark;
 7. The Way that goes forward appears to retreat;
 8. The smooth Way appears to be uneven;
 9. The highest virtue [is empty] like a valley;
 10. The purest white appears to be soiled;
 11. Vast virtue appears to be insufficient;
 12. Firm virtue appears thin and weak;
 13. The simplest reality appears to change.
-
14. The Great Square has no corners;
 15. The Great Vessel takes long to complete;
 16. The Great Tone makes little sound;
 17. The Great Image has no shape.
-
18. The Way is Great but has no name.
 19. Only the Way is good at beginning things and also good at bringing things to completion.

42

1. The Way gave birth to the One.
 2. The One gave birth to the Two.
 3. The Two gave birth to the Three.
 4. And the Three gave birth to the ten thousand things.
 5. The ten thousand things carry Yin on their backs and wrap their arms around Yang.
 6. Through the blending of the qi they arrive at a state of harmony.
-
7. The things that are hated by the whole world
 8. Are to be orphaned, widowed, and have no grain.
 9. Yet kings and dukes take these as their names.
 10. Thus with all things—some are increased by taking away;
 11. While some are diminished by adding on.
-
12. Therefore, what other men teach,
 13. [I] will also consider and then teach to others.
 14. Thus, "The strong and violent do not come to a natural end."
 15. I will take this as the father of my studies.

43

1. The softest, most pliable thing in the world runs roughshod over the firmest things in the world.
2. That which has no substance gets into that which has no spaces or cracks.
3. Before know that there is benefit in taking no action.
4. Wordless teaching, the benefit of taking no action—
5. Few in the world can realize these!

44

1. Fame or your body—which is more dear?
2. Your body or possessions—which is worth more?
3. Gain or loss—in which is there harm?
4. If your desires are great, you're bound to be extravagant;
5. If you store much away, you're bound to lose a great deal.
6. Therefore, if you know contentment, you'll not be disgraced.
7. If you know when to stop, you'll suffer no harm.
8. And in this way you can last a very long time.

45

1. Great completion seems incomplete;
2. Yet its usefulness is never exhausted.
3. Great fullness seems to be empty;
4. Yet its usefulness is never used up.
5. Great straightness seems to be bent.
6. Great skill seems to be clumsy.
7. Great surplus seems to stammer.
8. Activity overcomes cold;
9. Tranquility overcomes heat.
10. If you're quiet and tranquil you can become the ruler of the world.

46

1. When the world has the Way, ambling horses are retired to fertilize [fields].
2. When the world lacks the Way, war horses are reared in the suburbs.
3. Of crimes—none is greater than having things that one desires;
4. Of disasters—none is greater than not knowing when one has enough.
5. Of defects—none brings more sorrow than one desire to attain.
6. Therefore, the contentment one has when he knows that he has enough, is abiding contentment indeed.

47

1. No need to leave your door to know the whole world;
2. No need to peer through your windows to know the Way of Heaven.
3. The farther you go, the less you know.
4. Therefore the Sage knows without going,
5. Names without seeing,
6. And completes without doing a thing.

48

1. Those who work at their studies increase day after day;
2. Those who have heard the Dao decrease day after day.
3. They decrease and decrease, till they get to the point where they do nothing.
4. They do nothing and yet there's nothing left undone.
5. When someone wants to take control of the world, he must always be unconcerned with affairs.
6. a case where he's concerned with affairs,
7. be unworthy, as well, of taking control of the world.

49

1. The Sage constantly has no [set] mind;
2. He takes the mind of the common people as his mind.
3. Those who are good he regards as good;
4. Those who are not good he also regards as good.
5. [In this way] he attains goodness.
6. Those who are trustworthy he trusts;
7. And those who are not trustworthy he also trusts.
8. [In this way] he gets their trust.
9. As for the Sage's presence in the world—he is one with it.
10. And with the world he merges his mind.
11. The common people all fix their eyes and ears on him.
12. And the Sage treats them all as his children.

50

1. We come out into life and go back into death.
2. The companions of life are thirteen;
3. The companions of death are thirteen;
4. And yet people, because they regard life as LIFE, in all of their actions move towards the thirteen that belong to the realm of death.
5. Now, why is this so?
6. It's because they regard life as LIFE.
7. You've no doubt heard of those who are good at holding on to life:
8. When walking through hills, they don't avoid rhinos and tigers;
9. When they go into battle, they don't put on armor or shields;
10. The rhino has no place to probe with its horn;
11. The tiger finds no place to put its claws.
12. And weapons find no place to hold their blades.
13. Now, why is this so?
14. Because there is no place for death in them.

51

1. The Way gives birth to them and Virtue nourishes them;
2. Substance gives them form and their unique capacities complete them.
3. Therefore the ten thousand things venerate the Way and honor Virtue.
4. As for their veneration of the Way and their honoring of Virtue—
5. No one rewards them for it; it's constantly so on its own.
6. The Way gives birth to them, nourishes them, matures them, completes them, rests them, rears them, supports them, and protects them.
7. It gives birth to them but doesn't try to own them;
8. It acts on their behalf but doesn't make them dependent;
9. It matures them but doesn't rule them.
10. This we call Profound Virtue.

52

1. The world had a beginning,
2. and the Way can be considered the mother of the world.
3. If you attain the mother, in order to understand her children.
4. If you return and hold on to the mother, till the end of your life you'll suffer no harm.

5. Block up the holes;
6. Close the doors;
7. And till the end of your life you'll not labor.
8. Open the holes;
9. Meddle in affairs;
10. And till the end of your life you'll not be saved.

11. To receive the small is called "discernment."
12. To hold on to the pliant is called "strength."
13. If you use the rays to return to the bright light,
14. You'll not abandon your life to peril.
15. This is called Following the Constant.

53

1. Were I to have the least bit of knowledge, in walking on a Great Rod, it's only going astray that I would fear.
2. The Great Way is very level;
3. But people greatly delight in tortuous paths.
4. The courts are swept very clean;
5. While the fields are full of weeds;
6. And the granaries are all empty.
7. Their clothing—richly embroidered and colored;
8. While at their waists they carry sharp swords.
9. They gorge themselves on food, and of possessions and goods they have plenty.
10. This is called thievery!
11. And thievery certainly isn't the Way!

54

1. What is firmly set up can't be pulled down;
2. What is firmly embraced cannot slip free.
3. And your sons and grandsons, as a result, will sacrifice without end.
4. When you cultivate it in your person, your virtue will then be genuine;
5. When you cultivate it in your family, your virtue will then be overflow;
6. When you cultivate it in your village, your virtue will then be long lasting;
7. When you cultivate it in your state, your virtue will then be abundant;
8. And when you cultivate it throughout the world, your virtue will then be widespread.
9. Use the individual to examine the individual;
10. Use the family to examine the family;
- [10a Use the village to examine the village;]
11. Use the state to examine the state;
12. And use the world to examine the world;
13. How do I know that the world is so?
14. By this.

55

1. /ho embraces the fullness of Virtue,
2. e compared to a newborn babe.
3. wasps and scorpions, snakes and vipers do not sting him;

4. Birds of prey and fierce beasts do not seize him;
5. His bones and muscles are weak and pliant, yet his grasp is firm;
6. He does not yet know the meeting of male and female, yet his organ is aroused—
7. This is because his essence is at its height.
8. He can scream all day, yet he won't become hoarse—
9. This is because his harmony is at its height.
10. To know harmony is called "the constant";
11. To know the constant is called "being wise";
12. To add on to life is called a "bad omen";
13. For the mind to control the breath—that's called "forcing things."
14. When things reach their prime they get old;
15. This is called "not the Way."
16. What is not the Way will come to an early end.

56

1. Those who know don't talk about it; those who talk don't know it.
2. He blocks up his holes,
3. Closes his doors,
4. Softens the glare,
5. Settles the dust,
6. Files down the sharp edges,
7. And unties the tangles.
8. This is called Profound Union.
9. Therefore, there is no way to get intimate with him,
10. But there is also no way to shun him.
11. There is no way to benefit him,
12. But there is also no way to harm him.
13. There is no way to ennoble him,
14. But there is also no way to debase him.
15. For this very reason he's the noblest thing in the world.

57

1. Use the upright and correct to order the state;
2. Use surprise tactics when you use troops;
3. Use unconcern with affairs to take control of the world.
4. How do I know that this is so?
5. Well, the more taboos and prohibitions there are in the world, the poorer the people will be;
6. The more sharp weapons the people possess, the more muddled the states will be;
7. The more knowledge and skill people have, the more novel things will appear;
8. The more legal matters are made prominent, the more robbers and thieves there will be.
9. Therefore, the words of the Sage say:
10. I do nothing, and the people of themselves are transformed;
11. I love tranquility, and the people of themselves are upright;
12. I'm unconcerned with affairs, and the people of themselves become rich.
13. I desire not to desire, and the people of themselves are [genuine and simple, like] uncarved wood.

58

1. When the government is muddled and confused,
2. The people are genuine and sincere.
3. When the government is discriminate and clear,
4. The state is crafy and cunning.

[4a Disaster is that on which good fortune depends.]

5. Good fortune is that in which disaster's concealed.
6. Who knows where it will end?
7. For there is no [fixed] "correct."
8. The "correct" turns into the "deviant";
9. And "good" turns into "evil."
10. People's state of confusion
11. Has certainly existed for a long time.
12. Therefore be square but don't cut;
13. Be sharp but don't stab;
14. Be straightforward but not unrestrained;
15. Be bright but don't dazzle.

59

1. For ordering humanity and serving Heaven, nothing's so good as being sparing.
2. For only if you are sparing can you, therefore, early submit [to the Way].
3. Early submission—this is called to repeatedly accumulate Virtue.
4. If you repeatedly accumulate Virtue, then there is nothing you can't overcome.
5. When there is nothing you can't overcome, no one knows where it will end.
6. When no one knows where it will end, you can possess the state.
7. And when you possess the mother of the state, you can last a very long time.
8. This is called [having] deep roots and a firm base,
9. It's the Way of long life and long-lasting vision.

60

1. Ruling a large state is like cooking small fish.
2. When you use the Way to govern the world, evil spirits won't have godlike power.
3. Actually, it's not that evil spirits won't have godlike power,
4. It's that their power will not harm men.
5. But it's not [just] that their power won't harm men,
6. The Sage, also, will not harm them.
7. Since these two do not harm others,
8. Therefore their Virtues intermingle and return to them.

61

1. The large state is like the lower part of a river;
2. It is the female of the world;
3. It is the meeting point of the world.
4. The female constantly overcomes the male with tranquility.
5. Because she is tranquil, therefore she is fittingly underneath.
6. Large state—if it is below the small state, then it takes over the small state;
7. Small state—if it is below the large state, then it is taken over by the large state.

8. Therefore some by being low take over,
9. And some by being low are taken over.
10. Therefore the large state merely desires to unite and rear others;
11. While the small state merely desires to enter and serve others.
12. If both get what they want,
13. Then the large state should fittingly be underneath.

62

1. The Way is that toward which all things flow.
2. It is the treasure of the good man,
3. And that which protects the bad.
4. Beautiful words can be bought and sold;
5. Honored deeds can be presented to others as gifts;
6. [Even with] things that people regard as no good—will they be rejected?
7. Therefore, when the Son of Heaven is being enthroned or the Three Ministers installed,
8. Though you might salture them which disks of jade preceded by teams of four horses,
9. That's not so good as sitting still and offering this.
10. The reason why the ancients valued this—what was it?
11. Did they not say, "Those who seek, with this will attain, and those who commit offenses, with this will escape"?!
12. Therefore, it's the most valued thing in the world.

63

1. Act without acting;
2. Serve without concern for affairs;
3. Find flavor in what has no flavor.
4. Regard the small as large and the few as many,
5. And repay resentment with kindness.
6. Plan for the difficult while it is easy;
7. Act on the large while it's minute.
8. The most difficult things in the world begin as things that are easy;
9. The largest things in the world arise from the minute.
10. Therefore the Sage, to the end does not strive to do the great,
11. And as a result, he is able to accomplish the great;
12. Those who too lightly agree will necessarily be trusted by few;
13. And those who regard many things as easy will necessarily [end up] with many difficulties.
14. Therefore, even the Sage regards things as difficult,
15. And as a result, in the end he has no difficulty.

64

1. What is at rest is easy to hold;
2. What has not yet given a sign is easy to plan for;
3. The brittle is easily shattered;
4. The minute is easily scattered;
5. Act on it before it comes into being;
6. Order it before it turns into chaos.
7. [so big] that it takes both arms to surround starts out as the tiniest shoot;
8. A nine-story terrace rises up from a basket of dirt.

9. A high place one hundred, one thousand feet high begins from under your feet.

10. Those who act on it ruin it;

11. Those who hold on to it lose it.

12. Therefore the Sage does not act,

13. And as a result, he doesn't ruin [things];

14. He does not hold on to [things],

15. And as a result, he doesn't lose [things];

16. In people's handling of affairs, they always ruin things when they're right at the point of completion.

17. Therefore we say, "If you're as careful at the end as you were at the beginning, you'll have no failures."

18. Therefore the Sage desires not to desire and doesn't value goods that are hard to obtain;

19. He learns not to learn and returns to what the masses pass by;

20. He could help all things to be natural, yet he dare not do it.

65

1. Those who practiced the Way in antiquity,

2. Did not use it to enlighten the people.

3. Rather, they used it to make them dumb.

4. Now the reason why people are difficult to rule is because of their knowledge;

5. As a result, to use knowledge to rule the state

6. Is thievery of the state;

7. To use ignorance to rule the state

8. Is kindness to the state.

9. One who constantly understands these two,

10. Also [understands] the principle.

11. To constantly understand the principle—

12. This is called Profound Virtue.

13. Profound Virtue is deep, is far-reaching,

14. And together with things it returns.

15. Thus we arrive at the Great Accord.

66

1. 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.

2. for this reason they are able to be the kings of the one hundred valleys.

3. Therefore in the Sage's desire to be above the people,

4. He must in his speech be below them.

5. And in his desire to be at the front of the people,

6. He must in his person be behind them.

7. Thus he dwells above, yet the people do not regard him as heavy;

8. And he dwells in front, yet the people do not see him as posing a threat.

9. The whole world delights in his praise and never tires of him.

10. Is it not because he is not contentious,

11. That, as a result, no one in the world can contend with him?!

67

1. The whole world says, I'm Great;

2. , yet unlike [everyone else],

3. But it's precisely because I'm unlike [everyone else], that I'm therefore able to be Great.
4. Were I like [everyone else], for a long time now I'd have seemed insignificant and small.
5. I constantly have three treasures;
6. Hold on to them and treasure them.
7. The first is compassion;
8. The second is frugality;
9. And the third is not presuming to be at the forefront in the world.
10. Now, it's because I'm compassionate that I therefore can be courageous;
11. And it's because I'm frugal that I therefore can be magnanimous;
12. 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.
13. Now, if you abandon this compassion and yet try to be courageous,
14. And if you abandon this frugality and yet try to be magnanimous,
15. And if you abandon this staying behind and yet go to the fore,
16. Then you will die.
17. If with compassion you attack, then you'll win;
18. If you defend, then you'll stand firm.
19. When Heaven's about to establish him,
20. It's as though he surrounds him with the protective wall of compassion.

68

1. Therefore, one who is good at being a warrior doesn't make a show of his might;
2. One who is good in battle doesn't get angry;
3. One who is good at defeating the enemy doesn't engage him.
4. And one who is good at using men places himself below them.
5. This is called the virtue of not competing;
6. This is called [correctly] using men;
7. This is called matching Heaven.
8. It's the high point of the past.

69

1. Those who use weapons have a saying which goes:
2. "I don't presume to act like the host, and instead play the part of the guest;
3. I don't advance an inch, but rather retreat a foot."
4. This is called moving forward without moving forward—
5. Rolling up one's sleeves without baring one's arms—
6. Grasping firmly without holding a weapon—
7. And enticing to fight when there's no opponent.
8. Of disasters, none is greater than [thinking] you have no rival.
9. To think you have no rival is to come close to losing my treasures.
10. Therefore, when weapons are raised and [the opponents] are fairly well matched,
11. Then it's the one who feels grief that will win.

70

1. My words are easy to understand,
2. And easy to put into practice.
3. Yet no one in the world can understand them,
4. No one can put them into practice.
5. My words have an ancestor, and my deeds have a lord,
6. And it's simply because [people] have no understanding [of them], that they therefore don't

understand me.

7. But when those who understand me are few, then I'm of great value.

8. Therefore the Sage wears coarse woolen cloth, but inside it he holds on to jade.

71

1. To know you don't know is best.

2. Not to know you [don't] know is a flaw.

3. Therefore, the Sage's not being flawed

4. Stems from his recognizing a flaw as a flaw.

5. Therefore, he is flawless.

72

1. When the people don't respect those in power, then what they greatly fear is about to arrive.

2. Don't narrow the size of the places in which they live;

3. Don't oppress them in their means of livelihood.

4. It's simply because you do not oppress them, that they therefore will not be fed up.

5. Therefore the Sage knows himself but doesn't show himself;

6. he cherishes himself but doesn't value himself.

7. For this reason, he rejects that and takes this.

73

1. If you're brave in being daring, you'll be killed;

2. If you're brave in not being daring, you'll live.

3. With these two things, in one case there's profit, in the other there's harm.

4. The things Heaven hates—who knows why?

5. The Way of Heaven is not to fight yet to be good at winning—

6. Not to speak yet skillfully respond—

7. No one summons it, yet it comes on its own—

8. To be at ease yet carefully plan.

9. Heaven's net is large and vast;

10. Its mesh may be coarse yet nothing slips through.

74

1. If the people were constant [in their behavior] and yet did not fear death,

2. How could you use execution to intimidate them?

3. If you brought it about that the people were constant [in their behavior] and moreover feared, and [we] took those who behaved in abnormal ways and killed them—who would dare act in this way?!

4. If the people are constant and moreover necessarily fear death, then we constantly have the one in charge of executions.

5. Now killing people in place of the one in charge of executions, this [is like] cutting wood in place of the head carpenter.

6. And of those who cut wood in place of the head carpenter, very few do not hurt their hands!

75

1. The reason why people starve,

2. Cause they take so much in tax-grain.

3. Fore they starve.

4. The reason why the common people cannot be ruled,

5. Is because their superiors have their reason for acting.
6. Therefore they cannot be ruled.
7. The reason why people take death lightly,
8. Is because they so avidly seek after life.
9. Therefore they take death lightly.
10. Only those who do not act for the purpose of living—
11. Only these are superior to those who value life.

76

1. When people are born, they're supple and soft;
2. When they die, they end up stretched out firm and rigid;
3. When the ten thousand things and grasses and trees are alive, they're supple and pliant;
4. When they're dead, they're withered and dried out.
5. Therefore we say that the firm and rigid are compassions of death,
6. While the supple, the soft, the weak, and the delicate are compassions of life.
7. If a soldier is rigid, he won't win;
8. If a tree is rigid, it will come to its end.
9. Rigidity and power occupy the inferior position;
10. Suppleness, softness, weakness, and delicateness occupy the superior position.

77

1. The Way of Heaven is like the flexing of a bow.
2. The high it presses down; the low it raises up.
3. From those with a surplus it takes away; to those without enough it adds on.
4. Therefore the way of Heaven—
5. Is to reduce the excessive and increase the insufficient;
6. The Way of Man—
7. Is to reduce the insufficient and offer more to the excessive.
8. Now, who is able to have a surplus and use it to offer to Heaven?
9. Clearly, it's only the one who possesses the Way.
10. Therefore the Sage—
11. Take actions but does not possess them;
12. Accomplishes his tasks but does not dwell on them.
13. Like this, is his desire not to make a display of his worthiness.

78

1. In the whole world, nothing is softer and weaker than water.
2. And yet for attacking the hard and strong, nothing can bear it,
3. Because there is nothing you can use to replace it.
4. That water can defeat the unyielding—
5. That the weak can defeat the strong—
6. There is no one in the whole world who doesn't know it,
7. And yet there is no one who can put it into practice.
8. For this reason, the words of the Sage say:
9. To take on yourself the disgrace of the state—this is called being the lord of [the altars of] earth and grain;
10. To assume responsibility for all ill-omened events in the state—this is called being the king of the world.
11. Expect words seem to say the reverse [of what you expect them to say].

79

1. To make peace where there has been great resentment, there is bound to be resentment left over.
2. How could this be regarded as good?
3. Therefore the Sage [holds] the right tally yet makes no demands of others.
4. For this reason, those who have virtue are in charge of the tally;
5. Those without virtue are in charge of the taxes.
6. The Way of Heaven has no favorites,
7. It's always with the good man.

[7a Virtue—3,041 (characters)]

80

1. Let the country be small and people few—
2. Bring it about that there are weapons for "tens" and "hundreds," yet let no one use them;
3. Have the people regard death gravely and put migrating far from their minds.
4. Though they might have boats and carriages, no one will ride them;
5. Though they might have armor and spears, no one will display them.
6. Have the people return to knotting cords and using them.
7. They will relish their food,
8. Regard their clothing as beautiful,
9. Delight in their customs,
10. And feel safe and secure in their homes.
11. Neighboring states might overlook one another,
12. And the sounds of chickens and dogs might be overheard,
13. Yet the people will arrive at old age and death with no comings and goings between them.

81

1. Sincere words are not showy;
2. Showy words are not sincere.
3. Those who know are not "widely learned";
4. Those "widely learned" do not know.
5. The good do not have a lot;
6. Those with a lot are not good.
7. The Sage accumulates nothing.
8. Having used what he had for others,
9. He has even more.
10. Having given what he had to others,
11. What he has is even greater.
12. Therefore, the Way of Heaven is to benefit and not cause any harm;
13. The Way of Man is to act on behalf of others and not to compete with them.