

Laozi

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An abridgment of the Daodejing. Verse references such as ^{1:3} indicate the original source of the text, but don't imply a full quotation.

^{1:1} The Way that can be put into words is not the constant Way. ² The name that can be named is not the constant name.

^{1:3} The nameless is the beginning of all things. ⁴ The named is the mother of all things.

^{1:5} Thus, being constantly without desires is how you observe the secrets of all things. ⁶ Being constantly with desires is how you observe the manifestations of all things.

^{1:7} These two emerge from the same source, but they have different names; together they are called profound. ⁸ The most profound of the profound, the door to all secrets.

^{2:1} As soon as everyone in the world knows beauty as beauty, there is already

y ugliness. ² As soon as everyone knows good as good, there is bad.

^{2:3} Being and nonbeing produce each other; ⁴ difficult and easy complete each other; ⁵ long and short shape each other; ⁶ high and low fill each other; ⁷ note and voice harmonize with each other; ⁸ front and back follow each other: ⁹ these are constant.

^{2:10} Therefore a sage dwells in the work of nonforced action, ¹¹ and practices wordless teaching. ¹² All things arise, but he doesn't start them; ¹³ he acts on their behalf, but doesn't make them dependent; ¹⁴ he succeeds, but doesn't dwell on it.

^{2:15} It's only because he doesn't dwell on it, that it doesn't leave.

^{3:1} By not elevating the worthy, you keep the people from contention. ² By not valuing rare treasures, you keep the people from stealing. ³ By not displaying what is desirable, you keep the people from confusion.

^{3:4} Therefore a sage governs by clearing the people's minds, but filling their bellies; weakening their ambitions, but strengthening their bones.

^{3:5} He constantly keeps the people without cunning and without desires, ⁶ so that the intellectuals won't dare to meddle. ⁷ Act without forcing then everything is governed properly.

^{7:5} A sage puts himself in the background yet finds himself in the foreground; ⁶ puts himself out of mind yet finds himself cared for. ⁷ Isn't it because he's selfless that ⁸ he's able to achieve his self-interest?

^{8:1} The highest good is like water. ² Water's goodness is that it benefits all things, ³ yet it strives to dwell in the places that the crowd hates, ⁴ therefore it comes close to the Way.

^{8:6} In a dwelling, its goodness is location; ⁷ in a mind, depth; ⁸ in giving, being like Heaven; ⁹ in speaking, sincerity;

¹⁰ in government, order; ¹¹ in handling affairs, ability; ¹² in action, timeliness.

^{8:13} Because there is no contention, there is no blame.

^{9:1} If you hold and overfill a cup, it's not as good as stopping short. ² If you hammer and oversharpen a blade, you can't maintain it for long. ³ If gold and jade fill your rooms, no one is able to protect it. ⁴ If status and wealth lead to arrogance, you bring disaster upon yourself.

^{9:5} When the work is done, withdraw; this is the Way of Heaven.

^{11:1} Thirty spokes come together at one hub, ² but it's the emptiness inside the hub that makes it useful to the cart. ³ We form clay into a pot, ⁴ but it's the emptiness inside that makes the clay pot useful. ⁵ We chisel out doors and windows to make a room, ⁶ but it's the emptiness inside that makes the room useful.

^{11:7} Therefore, what is present brings benefit, ⁸ but what is absent makes it useful.

^{15:1} In antiquity, those who were good at the Way ² were subtle, wonderful, mysterious, penetrating, and too deep to know. ³ Because they can't be known, we're forced to describe their appearance: ⁴ Hesitant, as if crossing a river in winter. ⁵ Alert, as if fearing the neighbors on all sides. ⁶ Solemn, like a visiting guest. ⁷ Yielding, like ice about to melt. ⁸ Genuine, like uncarved wood. ⁹ Opaque, like muddy water. ¹⁰ Vast, like a valley.

^{15:11} If muddy water is still, it gradually becomes clear. ¹² If something at rest is moved, it gradually comes to life.

^{17:1} With the very best rulers, those below only know that the rulers exist, ² the next best are the rulers they love and praise, ³ next are the rulers they

fear, ⁴ and the worst are the rulers they despise.

^{17:7} When the task is accomplished and the work is done, all the common people say, "We did it ourselves."

^{18:1} When the Great Way ceased to be observed, benevolence and righteousness came into vogue. ² (Then) appeared wisdom and shrewdness, and there ensued great hypocrisy. ³ When harmony no longer prevailed throughout the six kinships, filial sons found their manifestation; ⁴ when the states and clans fell into disorder, loyal ministers appeared.

^{19:1} If we could renounce our sageness and discard our wisdom, it would be better for the people a hundredfold. If we could renounce our benevolence and discard our righteousness, the people would again become filial and kindly. If we could renounce our artful contrivances and discard our (scheming for)

gain, there would be no thieves nor robbers.

19:2 Those three methods (of government) Thought olden ways in elegance did fail And made these names their want of worth to veil; But simple views, and courses plain and true Would self-ish ends and many lusts eschew.

22:1 The partial becomes complete; the crooked, straight; the empty, full; the worn out, new. He whose (desires) are few gets them; he whose (desires) are many goes astray.

22:2 Therefore the sage holds in his embrace the one thing (of humility), and manifests it to all the world. He is free from self- display, and therefore he shines; from self-assertion, and therefore he is distinguished; from self-boasting, and therefore his merit is acknowledged; from self-complacency, and therefore he acquires superiority. It is because he is thus free from striving that therefore no one in the world

is able to strive with him.

^{22:3} That saying of the ancients that 'the partial becomes complete' was not vainly spoken:—all real completion is comprehended under it.

^{23:1} Abstaining from speech marks him who is obeying the spontaneity of his nature. A violent wind does not last for a whole morning; a sudden rain does not last for the whole day. To whom is it that these (two) things are owing? To Heaven and Earth. If Heaven and Earth cannot make such (spasmodic) actings last long, how much less can man!

^{23:2} Therefore when one is making the Tao his business, those who are also pursuing it, agree with him in it, and those who are making the manifestation of its course their object agree with him in that; while even those who are failing in both these things agree with him where they fail.

23:3 Hence, those with whom he agrees as to the Tao have the happiness of attaining to it; those with whom he agrees as to its manifestation have the happiness of attaining to it; and those with whom he agrees in their failure have also the happiness of attaining (to the Tao). (But) when there is not faith sufficient (on his part), a want of faith (in him) ensues (on the part of the others).

24:1 He who stands on his tiptoes does not stand firm; he who stretches his legs does not walk (easily). (So), he who displays himself does not shine; he who asserts his own views is not distinguished; he who vaunts himself does not find his merit acknowledged; he who is self-conceited has no superiority allowed to him. Such conditions, viewed from the standpoint of the Tao, are like remnants of food, or a tumour on the body, which all dislike. Hence those who pursue (the course) of the

Tao do not adopt and allow them.

^{27:1} The skilful traveller leaves no traces of his wheels or footsteps; the skilful speaker says nothing that can be found fault with or blamed; the skilful reckoner uses no tallies; the skilful closer needs no bolts or bars, while to open what he has shut will be impossible; the skilful binder uses no strings or knots, while to unloose what he has bound will be impossible. In the same way the sage is always skilful at saving men, and so he does not cast away any man; he is always skilful at saving things, and so he does not cast away anything. This is called 'Hiding the light of his procedure.'

^{27:2} Therefore the man of skill is a master (to be looked up to) by him who has not the skill; and he who has not the skill is the helper of (the reputation of) him who has the skill. If the one did not honour his master, and the other did not rejoice in his helper,

an (observer), though intelligent, might greatly err about them. This is called 'The utmost degree of mystery.'

^{29:1} If any one should wish to get the kingdom for himself, and to effect this by what he does, I see that he will not succeed. The kingdom is a spirit-like thing, and cannot be got by active doing. He who would so win it destroys it; he who would hold it in his grasp loses it.

^{29:2} The course and nature of things is such that What was in front is now behind; What warmed anon we freezing find. Strength is of weakness oft the spoil; The store in ruins mocks our toil. Hence the sage puts away excessive effort, extravagance, and easy indulgence.

^{30:1} He who would assist a lord of men in harmony with the Tao will not assert his mastery in the kingdom by force of

arms. Such a course is sure to meet with its proper return.

^{30:2} Wherever a host is stationed, briars and thorns spring up. In the sequence of great armies there are sure to be bad years.

^{30:3} A skilful (commander) strikes a decisive blow, and stops. He does not dare (by continuing his operations) to assert and complete his mastery. He will strike the blow, but will be on his guard against being vain or boastful or arrogant in consequence of it. He strikes it as a matter of necessity; he strikes it, but not from a wish for mastery.

^{30:4} When things have attained their strong maturity they become old. This may be said to be not in accordance with the Tao: and what is not in accordance with it soon comes to an end.

^{31:1} Now arms, however beautiful, are instruments of evil omen, hateful, it

may be said, to all creatures. Therefore they who have the Tao do not like to employ them.

^{31:2} The superior man ordinarily considers the left hand the most honourable place, but in time of war the right hand. Those sharp weapons are instruments of evil omen, and not the instruments of the superior man;—he uses them only on the compulsion of necessity. Calm and repose are what he prizes; victory (by force of arms) is to him undesirable. To consider this desirable would be to delight in the slaughter of men; and he who delights in the slaughter of men cannot get his will in the kingdom.

^{31:3} On occasions of festivity to be on the left hand is the prized position; on occasions of mourning, the right hand. The second in command of the army has his place on the left; the general commanding in chief has his on the right;—his place, that is, is assigned to

him as in the rites of mourning. He who has killed multitudes of men should weep for them with the bitterest grief; and the victor in battle has his place (rightly) according to those rites.

33:1 He who knows other men is discerning; he who knows himself is intelligent. He who overcomes others is strong; he who overcomes himself is mighty. He who is satisfied with his lot is rich; he who goes on acting with energy has a (firm) will.

33:2 He who does not fail in the requirements of his position, continues long; he who dies and yet does not perish, has longevity.

34:1 All-pervading is the Great Tao! It may be found on the left hand and on the right.

34:2 All things depend on it for their production, which it gives to them, not one refusing obedience to it. When its work is accomplished, it does not claim

the name of having done it. It clothes all things as with a garment, and makes no assumption of being their lord;—it may be named in the smallest things. All things return (to their root and disappear), and do not know that it is it which presides over their doing so;—it may be named in the greatest things.

^{34:3} Hence the sage is able (in the same way) to accomplish his great achievements. It is through his not making himself great that he can accomplish them.

^{35:1} To him who holds in his hands the Great Image (of the invisible Tao), the whole world repairs. Men resort to him, and receive no hurt, but (find) rest, peace, and the feeling of ease.

^{35:2} Music and dainties will make the passing guest stop (for a time). But though the Tao as it comes from the mouth, seems insipid and has no flavour, though it seems not worth being

looked at or listened to, the use of it is inexhaustible.

^{36:1} When one is about to take an inspiration, he is sure to make a (previous) expiration; when he is going to weaken another, he will first strengthen him; when he is going to overthrow another, he will first have raised him up; when he is going to despoil another, he will first have made gifts to him:—this is called 'Hiding the light (of his procedure).'

^{36:2} The soft overcomes the hard; and the weak the strong.

^{36:3} Fishes should not be taken from the deep; instruments for the profit of a state should not be shown to the people.

^{38:1} (Those who) possessed in highest degree the attributes (of the Tao) did not (seek) to show them, and therefore they possessed them (in fullest measure). (Those who) possessed in a lower

degree those attributes (sought how) not to lose them, and therefore they did not possess them (in fullest measure).

^{38:2} (Those who) possessed in the highest degree those attributes did nothing (with a purpose), and had no need to do anything. (Those who) possessed them in a lower degree were (always) doing, and had need to be so doing.

^{38:3} (Those who) possessed the highest benevolence were (always seeking) to carry it out, and had no need to be doing so. (Those who) possessed the highest righteousness were (always seeking) to carry it out, and had need to be so doing.

^{38:4} (Those who) possessed the highest (sense of) propriety were (always seeking) to show it, and when men did not respond to it, they bared the arm and marched up to them.

^{38:5} Thus it was that when the Tao

was lost, its attributes appeared; when its attributes were lost, benevolence appeared; when benevolence was lost, righteousness appeared; and when righteousness was lost, the proprieties appeared.

^{38:6} Now propriety is the attenuated form of leal-heartedness and good faith, and is also the commencement of disorder; swift apprehension is (only) a flower of the Tao, and is the beginning of stupidity.

^{38:7} Thus it is that the Great man abides by what is solid, and eschews what is flimsy; dwells with the fruit and not with the flower. It is thus that he puts away the one and makes choice of the other.

^{43:1} The softest thing in the world dashes against and overcomes the hardest; that which has no (substantial) existence enters where there is no crevice. I know hereby what advantage belongs to doing nothing (with a purpose).

43:2 There are few in the world who attain to the teaching without words, and the advantage arising from non-action.

43:1 Or fame or life, Which do you hold more dear? Or life or wealth, To which would you adhere? Keep life and lose those other things; Keep them and lose your life:—which brings Sorrow and pain more near?

43:2 Thus we may see, Who cleaves to fame Rejects what is more great; Who loves large stores Gives up the richer state.

43:3 Who is content Needs fear no shame. Who knows to stop Incurs no blame. From danger free Long live shall he.

43:1 Who thinks his great achievements poor Shall find his vigour long endure. Of greatest fulness, deemed a void, Exhaustion ne'er shall stem the tide. Do thou what's straight still crooked deem; Thy greatest art still

stupid seem, And eloquence a stammering scream.

^{43:2} Constant action overcomes cold; being still overcomes heat. Purity and stillness give the correct law to all under heaven.

^{46:1} When the Tao prevails in the world, they send back their swift horses to (draw) the dung-carts. When the Tao is disregarded in the world, the war-horses breed in the border lands.

^{46:2} There is no guilt greater than to sanction ambition; no calamity greater than to be discontented with one's lot; no fault greater than the wish to be getting. Therefore the sufficiency of contentment is an enduring and unchanging sufficiency.

^{47:1} Without going outside his door, one understands (all that takes place) under the sky; without looking out from his window, one sees the Tao of

Heaven. The farther that one goes out (from himself), the less he knows.

^{47:2} Therefore the sages got their knowledge without travelling; gave their (right) names to things without seeing them; and accomplished their ends without any purpose of doing so.

^{48:1} He who devotes himself to learning (seeks) from day to day to increase (his knowledge); he who devotes himself to the Tao (seeks) from day to day to diminish (his doing).

^{48:2} He diminishes it and again diminishes it, till he arrives at doing nothing (on purpose). Having arrived at this point of non-action, there is nothing which he does not do.

^{48:3} He who gets as his own all under heaven does so by giving himself no trouble (with that end). If one take trouble (with that end), he is not equal to getting as his own all under heaven.

^{49:1} The sage has no invariable mind

of his own; he makes the mind of the people his mind.

^{49:2} To those who are good (to me), I am good; and to those who are not good (to me), I am also good;—and thus (all) get to be good. To those who are sincere (with me), I am sincere; and to those who are not sincere (with me), I am also sincere;—and thus (all) get to be sincere.

^{49:3} The sage has in the world an appearance of indecision, and keeps his mind in a state of indifference to all. The people all keep their eyes and ears directed to him, and he deals with them all as his children.

^{50:1} Men come forth and live; they enter (again) and die.

^{50:2} Of every ten three are ministers of life (to themselves); and three are ministers of death.

^{50:3} There are also three in every ten whose aim is to live, but whose movements tend to the land (or place) of

death. And for what reason? Because of their excessive endeavours to perpetuate life.

^{50:4} But I have heard that he who is skilful in managing the life entrusted to him for a time travels on the land without having to shun rhinoceros or tiger, and enters a host without having to avoid buff coat or sharp weapon. The rhinoceros finds no place in him into which to thrust its horn, nor the tiger a place in which to fix its claws, nor the weapon a place to admit its point. And for what reason? Because there is in him no place of death.

^{53:1} If I were suddenly to become known, and (put into a position to) conduct (a government) according to the Great Tao, what I should be most afraid of would be a boastful display.

^{53:2} The great Tao (or way) is very level and easy; but people love the by-ways.

53:3 Their court(-yards and buildings)
shall be well kept, but their fields
shall be ill-cultivated, and their granaries
very empty. They shall wear
elegant and ornamented robes, carry
a sharp sword at their girdle, pamper
themselves in eating and drinking, and
have a superabundance of property and
wealth;—such (princes) may be called
robbers and boasters. This is contrary
to the Tao surely!

54:1 What (Tao's) skilful planter plants
Can never be uprooted; What his skilful
arms enfold, From him can ne'er be
borne. Sons shall bring in lengthening
line, Sacrifices to his shrine.

54:2 Tao when nursed within one's self,
His vigour will make true; And where
the family it rules What riches will ac-
cure! The neighbourhood where it pre-
vails In thriving will abound; And when
'tis seen throughout the state, Good for-
tune will be found. Employ it the king-
dom o'er, And men thrive all around.

54:3 In this way the effect will be seen in the person, by the observation of different cases; in the family; in the neighbourhood; in the state; and in the kingdom.

54:4 How do I know that this effect is sure to hold thus all under the sky? By this (method of observation).

56:1 He who knows (the Tao) does not (care to) speak (about it); he who is (ever ready to) speak about it does not know it.

56:2 He (who knows it) will keep his mouth shut and close the portals (of his nostrils). He will blunt his sharp points and unravel the complications of things; he will attemper his brightness, and bring himself into agreement with the obscurity (of others). This is called 'the Mysterious Agreement.'

56:3 (Such an one) cannot be treated familiarly or distantly; he is beyond all consideration of profit or injury; of no-

bility or meanness:—he is the noblest man under heaven.

57:1 A state may be ruled by (measures of) correction; weapons of war may be used with crafty dexterity; (but) the kingdom is made one's own (only) by freedom from action and purpose.

57:2 How do I know that it is so? By these facts:—In the kingdom the multiplication of prohibitive enactments increases the poverty of the people; the more implements to add to their profit that the people have, the greater disorder is there in the state and clan; the more acts of crafty dexterity that men possess, the more do strange contrivances appear; the more display there is of legislation, the more thieves and robbers there are.

57:3 Therefore a sage has said, 'I will do nothing (of purpose), and the people will be transformed of themselves; I will be fond of keeping still, and the people

will of themselves become correct. I will take no trouble about it, and the people will of themselves become rich; I will manifest no ambition, and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity.'

58:1 The government that seems the most unwise, Oft goodness to the people best supplies; That which is meddling, touching everything, Will work but ill, and disappointment bring. Misery!—happiness is to be found by its side! Happiness!—misery lurks beneath it! Who knows what either will come to in the end?

58:2 Shall we then dispense with correction? The (method of) correction shall by a turn become distortion, and the good in it shall by a turn become evil. The delusion of the people (on this point) has indeed subsisted for a long time.

58:3 Therefore the sage is (like) a square which cuts no one (with its an-

gles); (like) a corner which injures no one (with its sharpness). He is straightforward, but allows himself no license; he is bright, but does not dazzle.

59:1 For regulating the human (in our constitution) and rendering the (proper) service to the heavenly, there is nothing like moderation.

59:2 It is only by this moderation that there is effected an early return (to man's normal state). That early return is what I call the repeated accumulation of the attributes (of the Tao). With that repeated accumulation of those attributes, there comes the subjugation (of every obstacle to such return). Of this subjugation we know not what shall be the limit; and when one knows not what the limit shall be, he may be the ruler of a state.

59:3 He who possesses the mother of the state may continue long. His case is like that (of the plant) of which we say that its roots are deep and its flower

stalks firm:—this is the way to secure that its enduring life shall long be seen.

62:1 Tao has of all things the most honoured place. No treasures give good men so rich a grace; Bad men it guards, and doth their ill efface.

62:2 (Its) admirable words can purchase honour; (its) admirable deeds can raise their performer above others. Even men who are not good are not abandoned by it.

62:3 Therefore when the sovereign occupies his place as the Son of Heaven, and he has appointed his three ducal ministers, though (a prince) were to send in a round symbol-of-rank large enough to fill both the hands, and that as the precursor of the team of horses (in the court-yard), such an offering would not be equal to (a lesson of) this Tao, which one might present on his knees.

62:4 Why was it that the ancients prized this Tao so much? Was it not

because it could be got by seeking for it, and the guilty could escape (from the stain of their guilt) by it? This is the reason why all under heaven consider it the most valuable thing.

^{63:1} (It is the way of the Tao) to act without (thinking of) acting; to conduct affairs without (feeling the) trouble of them; to taste without discerning any flavour; to consider what is small as great, and a few as many; and to recompense injury with kindness.

^{63:2} (The master of it) anticipates things that are difficult while they are easy, and does things that would become great while they are small. All difficult things in the world are sure to arise from a previous state in which they were easy, and all great things from one in which they were small. Therefore the sage, while he never does what is great, is able on that account to accomplish the greatest things.

^{63:3} He who lightly promises is sure to

keep but little faith; he who is continually thinking things easy is sure to find them difficult. Therefore the sage sees difficulty even in what seems easy, and so never has any difficulties.

64:1 That which is at rest is easily kept hold of; before a thing has given indications of its presence, it is easy to take measures against it; that which is brittle is easily broken; that which is very small is easily dispersed. Action should be taken before a thing has made its appearance; order should be secured before disorder has begun.

64:2 The tree which fills the arms grew from the tiniest sprout; the tower of nine storeys rose from a (small) heap of earth; the journey of a thousand li commenced with a single step.

64:3 He who acts (with an ulterior purpose) does harm; he who takes hold of a thing (in the same way) loses his hold. The sage does not act (so), and therefore does no harm; he does not lay

hold (so), and therefore does not lose his bold. (But) people in their conduct of affairs are constantly ruining them when they are on the eve of success. If they were careful at the end, as (they should be) at the beginning, they would not so ruin them.

^{64:4} Therefore the sage desires what (other men) do not desire, and does not prize things difficult to get; he learns what (other men) do not learn, and turns back to what the multitude of men have passed by. Thus he helps the natural development of all things, and does not dare to act (with an ulterior purpose of his own).

^{66:1} That whereby the rivers and seas are able to receive the homage and tribute of all the valley streams, is their skill in being lower than they;—it is thus that they are the kings of them all. So it is that the sage (ruler), wishing to be above men, puts himself by his words below them, and, wishing to be before

them, places his person behind them.

^{66:2} In this way though he has his place above them, men do not feel his weight, nor though he has his place before them, do they feel it an injury to them.

^{66:3} Therefore all in the world delight to exalt him and do not weary of him. Because he does not strive, no one finds it possible to strive with him.

^{67:1} All the world says that, while my Tao is great, it yet appears to be inferior (to other systems of teaching). Now it is just its greatness that makes it seem to be inferior. If it were like any other (system), for long would its smallness have been known!

^{67:2} But I have three precious things which I prize and hold fast. The first is gentleness; the second is economy; and the third is shrinking from taking precedence of others.

^{67:3} With that gentleness I can be bold; with that economy I can be lib-

eral; shrinking from taking precedence of others, I can become a vessel of the highest honour. Now-a-days they give up gentleness and are all for being bold; economy, and are all for being liberal; the hindmost place, and seek only to be foremost;—(of all which the end is) death.

67:4 Gentleness is sure to be victorious even in battle, and firmly to maintain its ground. Heaven will save its possessor, by his (very) gentleness protecting him.

68:1 He who in (Tao's) wars has skill
Assumes no martial port; He who fights
with most good will To rage makes no
resort. He who vanquishes yet still
Keeps from his foes apart; He whose
hefts men most fulfil Yet humbly plies
his art.

68:2 Thus we say, 'He ne'er contends,
And therein is his might.' Thus we say,
'Men's wills he bends, That they with

him unite.' Thus we say, 'Like Heaven's his ends, No sage of old more bright.'

71:1 To know and yet (think) we do not know is the highest (attainment); not to know (and yet think) we do know is a disease.

71:2 It is simply by being pained at (the thought of) having this disease that we are preserved from it. The sage has not the disease. He knows the pain that would be inseparable from it, and therefore he does not have it.

72:1 When the people do not fear what they ought to fear, that which is their great dread will come on them.

72:2 Let them not thoughtlessly indulge themselves in their ordinary life; let them not act as if weary of what that life depends on.

72:3 It is by avoiding such indulgence that such weariness does not arise.

72:4 Therefore the sage knows (these things) of himself, but does not parade

(his knowledge); loves, but does not (appear to set a) value on, himself. And thus he puts the latter alternative away and makes choice of the former.

73:1 He whose boldness appears in his daring (to do wrong, in defiance of the laws) is put to death; he whose boldness appears in his not daring (to do so) lives on. Of these two cases the one appears to be advantageous, and the other to be injurious. But

73:2 When Heaven's anger smites a man, Who the cause shall truly scan? On this account the sage feels a difficulty (as to what to do in the former case).

73:3 It is the way of Heaven not to strive, and yet it skilfully overcomes; not to speak, and yet it is skilful in (obtaining a reply); does not call, and yet men come to it of themselves. Its demonstrations are quiet, and yet its plans are skilful and effective. The meshes of

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

^{75:1} The people suffer from famine because of the multitude of taxes consumed by their superiors. It is through this that they suffer famine.

^{75:2} The people are difficult to govern because of the (excessive) agency of their superiors (in governing them). It is through this that they are difficult to govern.

^{75:3} The people make light of dying because of the greatness of their labours in seeking for the means of living. It is this which makes them think light of dying. Thus it is that to leave the subject of living altogether out of view is better than to set a high value on it.

^{76:1} Man at his birth is supple and weak; at his death, firm and strong. (So it is with) all things. Trees and plants, in their early growth, are soft

and brittle; at their death, dry and withered.

^{76:2} Thus it is that firmness and strength are the concomitants of death; softness and weakness, the concomitants of life.

^{76:3} Hence he who (relies on) the strength of his forces does not conquer; and a tree which is strong will fill the out-stretched arms, (and thereby invites the feller.)

^{76:4} Therefore the place of what is firm and strong is below, and that of what is soft and weak is above.

^{77:1} May not the Way (or Tao) of Heaven be compared to the (method of) bending a bow? The (part of the bow) which was high is brought low, and what was low is raised up. (So Heaven) diminishes where there is superabundance, and supplements where there is deficiency.

^{77:2} It is the Way of Heaven to diminish superabundance, and to supplement deficiency. It is not so with the way of

man. He takes away from those who have not enough to add to his own superabundance.

^{77:3} Who can take his own superabundance and therewith serve all under heaven? Only he who is in possession of the Tao!

^{77:4} Therefore the (ruling) sage acts without claiming the results as his; he achieves his merit and does not rest (arrogantly) in it:—he does not wish to display his superiority.

^{79:1} When a reconciliation is effected (between two parties) after a great animosity, there is sure to be a grudge remaining (in the mind of the one who was wrong). And how can this be beneficial (to the other)?

^{79:2} Therefore (to guard against this), the sage keeps the left-hand portion of the record of the engagement, and does not insist on the (speedy) fulfilment of it by the other party. (So), he who has the attributes (of the Tao) regards

(only) the conditions of the engagement, while he who has not those attributes regards only the conditions favourable to himself.

^{79:3} In the Way of Heaven, there is no partiality of love; it is always on the side of the good man.

^{80:1} In a little state with a small population, I would so order it, that, though there were individuals with the abilities of ten or a hundred men, there should be no employment of them; I would make the people, while looking on death as a grievous thing, yet not remove elsewhere (to avoid it).

^{80:2} Though they had boats and carriages, they should have no occasion to ride in them; though they had buff coats and sharp weapons, they should have no occasion to don or use them.

^{80:3} I would make the people return to the use of knotted cords (instead of the written characters).

80:4 They should think their (coarse) food sweet; their (plain) clothes beautiful; their (poor) dwellings places of rest; and their common (simple) ways sources of enjoyment.

80:5 There should be a neighbouring state within sight, and the voices of the fowls and dogs should be heard all the way from it to us, but I would make the people to old age, even to death, not have any intercourse with it.

81:1 Sincere words are not fine; fine words are not sincere. Those who are skilled (in the Tao) do not dispute (about it); the disputatious are not skilled in it. Those who know (the Tao) are not extensively learned; the extensively learned do not know it.

81:2 The sage does not accumulate (for himself). The more that he expends for others, the more does he possess of his own; the more that he gives to others, the more does he have himself.

81:3 With all the sharpness of the Way of Heaven, it injures not; with all the doing in the way of the sage he does not strive.