
The Tao Te Ching

An Introduction by Stan Rosenthal

PREFACE

A number of problems arise when translating any work from a written language, such as early Chinese, into twentieth century English. One such problem is the difference between the written forms of the two languages, another is the difference between the two cultures, and a third is the time which elapsed between the writing of the original work, in this instance, some time between six hundred and three hundred years before the Christian era, and the compilation of the textual arrangement by Wang Bih, dating from the third century A.D., used today.

There are however, other problems for any translator/interpreter of this work. The first is the number of changes in the form of written Chinese characters since the original work was written. At least one such change occurred prior to the arrangement of the text by Wang Bih, and at least another three have been implemented since his time.

The source of another problem has been described by Dr. L. Wieger (please see bibliography/reference section below) as, "... the ignorance of scribes who continually brought to light faulty forms which were reproduced by posterity".

Another problem related to those mentioned immediately above is the change in writing instruments used by Chinese scribes. With the invention of the paint brush, the efficient 'fibre tipped pen' (made from vegetable fibre soaked in ink, and held in a hollow bamboo tube) fell into disuse. The resultant change in writing style was due to the fact that the writer had less control over the stroke of a brush than of an instrument with a fine, firm tip. Despite this handicap, the brush could be used to paint on silk, and was considered to produce a more 'artistic' form of calligraphy than the earlier instrument. Furthermore, it became almost a 'hallmark of a gentleman' to write in a free, flowing and virtually illegible style. There can be no doubt that this was the cause of many errors which were made and subsequently compounded.

A further problem is the possibility of confusion, caused in part by the multiple meanings of some of the limited number of characters said to have been used in the original text, this being attributed to the cryptic style of Lao Tzu. It is also in part a result of the nature of early Chinese grammatical structure itself. Even if a literal translation were desirable, it would make little sense to the reader schooled only in Western grammar, who would therefore be unfairly presented with the problem of 'guessing the missing words', which, it may be said, is a primary function of the translator of any work such as this.

Having discussed the problems which exist for the translator of such a work as the Tao Te Ching, it is only reasonable to mention briefly the problem which exists for the reader, concerning the significance of various influences upon a translator.

There are already at least forty-two English translations of this work (listed by Clark Melling of the University of New Mexico), each, I am sure, carried out as ably and honestly as was possible. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, for any person not to be influenced by the philosophy, beliefs, culture and politics of their own society, historical period and education system.

Even a brief glance at various translations of the work of Lao Tzu will illustrate how such a 'hidden curriculum' surreptitiously imposes itself upon even the most honest of men, thus creating a major problem for the reader. This is the case even for the reader who merely hopes to see an accurate English rendering of the work, but the reader's problems are compounded if he or she seeks a translation which presents a reasonably accurate description of Taoism (Tao Chia), the 'system' of which the Tao Te Ching is a major work. It must be said of the existing English translations, that most treat the Tao Te Ching as a literary or poetic work, whilst many others treat it as a work of mysticism, rather than a work of classical scholarship, which I believe it to be, describing the key concepts of Taoist philosophy (tao chia) expressed in a poetic manner. My intention here has been to provide a translation suitable for those readers wishing to discover something of that philosophy, as described in one of its major works.

On the matter of 'translation', I should state that I consider the term to be a misnomer when applied to an English rendering of this classical Chinese work. For the reasons mentioned above, I believe that any such work is at least as much, and probably more a matter of interpretation than of literal translation. This problem is admirably expressed by Arthur Hummel, former Head of the Division of Orientalia at the Library of Congress when he writes in his foreword to Dr. C.H. Wu's translation (referenced), "Any translation is an interpretation for the language of one tradition does not provide exact verbal equivalents for all the creative ideas of another tradition."

Whilst I have tried to ensure the accuracy of my own sources, this does not of course guarantee the accuracy of the result. Furthermore, since I have not attempted to be literally accurate in my interpretation, and because this rendering is not intended to compete with such translations, I have listed below some titles, including ten translations of the Tao Te Ching, which have been of value in this undertaking. They are listed in order to acknowledge the work of the translators, as well as to provide alternative sources for those readers wishing to conduct their own research and comparisons. The other titles are those of books on the Chinese language, and these are listed for the benefit of those readers wishing to undertake their own translations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

'Tao Te Ching', translated by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, is published by Wildwood House. It concerns itself with the 'spiritual level of being', and contains

Chinese characters written in a cursive form which although not always easy to read, are certainly aesthetically pleasing. However, the photographs which illustrate this edition are also pleasing to the eye, and it is as much for the illustrations as for the translation that this edition is recommended.

'Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching' is translated by D.C. Lau, and published by Penguin Books in their 'Penguin Classics' series. It is currently in its seventeenth printing, the first edition dating from nineteen sixty-three. Although this translation is written in a style which I find rather too literal for my own taste, it carries a very lucid introduction, as well as footnotes, a glossary and a reference section, all of which recommend it to the reader who wishes to check reference sources.

'Truth and Nature', by Cheng Lin, published in Hong Kong, does not claim to be a translation, but interprets the Tao Te Ching in a very interesting manner. Two arrangements of the Chinese text are included, one according to the arrangement of Wang Bih. The reader wishing to use the original language as a source will find the Chinese text in this edition of value. It must be emphasized however, that there are a number of Chinese texts available. Whilst these usually conform to Wang Bih's arrangement of the text, they do vary in detail.

'The Simple Way of Lao Tsze' (sic) is a very pleasant analysis of the Tao Te Ching first published by 'The Shrine of Wisdom' in London some sixty years ago. It contains many footnotes, and is an interpretation rather than a direct translation, attempting to describe the 'spirit' of Taoism, and doing so without pretence. However, some readers may find the nomenclature somewhat esoteric (although it is only reasonable to expect that the same criticism might be levelled at my own interpretation).

'Lao-Tzu: "My Words are very easy to understand" ' by Man-jan Cheng, translated by Tam C.Gibbs, and published by North Atlantic Books, is a Confucianist (rather than Taoist) rendering. It therefore contains material of value to the student who wishes to 'see both sides of the coin'. This edition consists of a series of lectures by Man-jan Cheng, and includes the Chinese texts of both the Tao Te Ching and the lectures. The printing of the Chinese characters is large and clearly printed, which commends it to the student requiring a text in the 'original' language, although it must be emphasized that there are a number of differences between the Chinese text in this edition and that of Dr. Wu, mentioned immediately below.

The translation by Dr. J.C.H. Wu is in its eighteenth printing, a fact which will not surprise any reader of this delightful little edition. Small in size, and containing an excellently drafted Chinese text, this translation is likely to appeal to the reader who is of the Catholic faith.

'The Way and Its Power' is the title of the translation by Arthur Waley, published as 'A Mandala Book' by Unwin Paperbacks. As the translator himself says, it "represents a compromise...", but even so it is possibly the most widely read translation in the U.K. It is for this reason that it is included as a reference work worthy of reading. The use of the word 'power' in the title of this translation provides a clue to the style of the translator, who employs very strong academic (but non-Taoist) arguments, which are made in his copious introduction.

The translation entitled 'Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu', translated by A.J. Bahm, and published by Frederick Ungar is well supported by notes in an 'afterword'. The translation itself is written in a very pleasant and easy-to-read style, which is (unfortunately) unusual for the work of a professor of philosophy.

'Tao: A New Way of Thinking' by Chang Chung-yuan, published by Harper and Row, is a translation which contains excellent commentaries and footnotes. The translator undoubtedly has expert historical and philosophical knowledge which he puts to good use in this excellent edition, in which he compares various aspects of Taoist philosophy with that of European philosophers.

The tenth translation used for my own researches is 'The Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu' translated by James Legge as one of a two volume set of 'The Texts of Taoism', published by Dover Publications. Although written in eighteen-ninety, this translation withstands the test of time extremely well. The translator was very knowledgeable in his subject, as well as of Chinese philosophy, literature and religions, and does not hesitate to state his opinions, arguing a strong case where these differ from those of other translators from the Chinese.

Because of the changes in calligraphic style mentioned earlier, any student wishing to conduct their own research into the Chinese text of the Tao Te Ching will need to be at least familiar with the relationship between modern and classical Chinese characters.

An outstanding book covering the 'middle period' is the 'Ch'ien Tzu Wen' (Thousand Character Classic) of Chou Hsing-szu, written some time between 507 and 521 A.D., an excellent English language edition being that edited by F. W. Paar, with calligraphy by Fong-Chih Lui, and published by Frederick Ungar in 1963. This edition also carries translations in French, German and Latin. Although it is not a rendering of the Tao Te Ching, it contains many passages from that work.

'Chinese Characters' by L. Wieger, translated from the French by L. Davrout (mentioned previously) is a lexicon with etymological lessons, but also contains both a phonetic dictionary and a dictionary of characters arranged by 'radicals' (the means by which it is possible to 'find' a character written in 'Kanji', the root form of both Chinese and Japanese writing in a dictionary). This book also contains a number of examples of 'early period' characters which will be of value to those readers interested in the calligraphy and other graphic communication.

In similar vein, 'Analysis of Chinese Characters', by G.D. Wilder and J.H. Ingram, published by Dover Publications, complements the work of Wieger, listing one thousand and two characters, together with derivations and modern alternatives.

Chang Hsuan's work on 'The Etymologies of 3000 Chinese Characters in Common Usage', published by Hong Kong University Press, also shows the derivations of many Chinese characters, from the 'small seal' script. Unfortunately however, this book contains virtually no English and is therefore intended primarily for the student who is already proficient in the Chinese language.

The earliest form of Chinese writing predates even the Tao Te Ching, and possibly originates from the same period as the original I Ching of Fu Hsi. This writing consists

of characters inscribed on bone, shell and antler horn, the collection being known as 'The Couling-Chalfant Collection of Inscribed Oracle Bones'. The collection has long been dissipated, some pieces being in the Royal Scottish Museum (Edinburgh), some in the Carnegie Museum (Pittsburg), other pieces in the British Museum (London), and the remainder in the Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago). Fortunately though, an excellent catalogue exists, drawn by F.H. Chalfant, edited by R.S. Britton, and published by the Commercial Press, Shanghai, in 1935. This book illustrates each of the pieces, showing the characters inscribed on the original material. It is a particularly valuable work for those interested in tracing the origins of many of the Chinese characters in use to this day. Translations are not provided.

The philosopher Chuang Tzu, a follower of Lao Tzu, did much to clarify the somewhat cryptic style of his teacher. The book 'Chuang Tzu' translated by H.A. Giles, published by Unwin Paperbacks, renders the sayings of the later master into English in a clear and fine literary style. This book, said to have been originally written by Chuang Tzu himself sometime between the fourth and third centuries before the Christian era, contains a number of references to the Tao Te Ching. For this reason it is a valuable book, but its value is increased by the humour and depth inherent in Chuang Tzu's writing.

It may be of interest to some readers that the dictionaries I have used are Lin Yutang's 'Chinese English Dictionary of Modern Usage', published by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Andrew Nelson's 'The Modern Reader's Japanese-English Character Dictionary', published by Charles E. Tuttle.

Since it may seem strange that I have used a Japanese dictionary to translate a Chinese work, it is perhaps worth mentioning that many Japanese characters are Chinese in origin, and that the characters in Andrew Nelson's dictionary are listed in a sequence, and according to a system different from the same characters in the dictionary by Lin Yutang. Although the spoken Chinese and Japanese languages differ considerably, the written Japanese language has its roots in the Chinese. I therefore use the Japanese dictionary as a 'cross-reference' for finding the meaning of characters which I have difficulty in locating by Lin - Yutang's arrangement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fact that I have not listed more of the forty-two English translations of the Tao Te Ching is not meant to reflect in any way on their quality, but simply means that I have not used them on this occasion; all of them, of course, have something of value to offer.

Since I have acknowledged the work of other translators and interpreters, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the help I received from my own teachers, each of whom attempted to aid my understanding and development in his own unique manner. The reason why I refrain from mentioning them by name in print is not due to disrespect, but rather out of respect for the Taoist belief that,

"To boast of one's teachers
is to try to give credence

to one's own words."

Fortunately it is not considered boastful to mention in print, one's own students. It is therefore with pleasure and gratitude that I acknowledge the help I have received from those who consider me their teacher, and through whose questions I have gained so much. On this occasion my special thanks go to Ian (and his wife, Jeanette) for their company, the help they provided without being asked, and for their patience; to Michael, who did most of the proof-reading; to Jackie who transcribed my notes to the 'word processor' (which does not know that its 'sixty-four bit binary system' is an outcome of Taoist 'yin-yang' philosophy) and who tried to ensure that what I had written made sense; and to Judith, particularly for providing me with a copy of her B.A. dissertation 'A Comparison of Plotinus and Chuang Tzu', which was of great help in explaining some of the more obscure phrases in other translated texts.

Finally, I take this opportunity (on behalf of Judith and all other members of the English speaking Zen Taoist community) to thank Professor Cavendish, former Professor of Philosophy at Saint David's University College, Lampeter, who personally supervised her dissertation, which is of value to us all.

INTRODUCTION: THE TAO TE CHING, LAO TZU, TAOISM AND ZEN

There is frequently some confusion between three practices, each of which is generically termed 'Taoism'. Since this confusion exists, it is important that the prospective student of Taoism can distinguish between them. The three activities, or practices of Taoism are Philosophical or speculative Taoism, Religious or esoteric Taoism, and Alchemical or 'debased' Taoism.

The earliest of these is Philosophical Taoism (Tao-chia), which is believed to have developed between the sixth to the second century before the Christian era, from the earlier 'Yin-Yang' school of philosophy, whose teachings it inherited and integrated into its own 'philosophical system' through the 'I Ching', now (unfortunately) most widely known as a work of 'divination'.

Philosophical Taoism is generally thought to have been based on the 'Tao Te Ching' of the possibly legendary Lao Tzu, and the work of his follower, Chuang Tzu, which is known through the book which bears his name, and is otherwise without title.

The major development and establishment of Religious Taoism (Tao-chiao) took place during the two Han dynasties (from 206 B.C. to 220 A.D.), and considered the Tao Te Ching as divine teaching, using specific interpretations of Lao Tzu's work as one of its own primary scriptures. The Religious Taoists deified Lao Tzu, describing him as the 'T'ai Shang Lao-chun'. In later centuries, Religious Taoism was to become a very powerful movement throughout China, where it was widely practiced, at least until the middle of the twentieth century.

The earliest known reference to Alchemy (in Eastern and Western Literature) is in the 'Shi-chi', written about eighty-five B.C., but the 'Chou'-i ts'an t'ung ch'i' of Wei Po-yang (c.200 A.D.) was probably the first major alchemical text to use a Taoist work to

this end, some authorities believing the treatise to be a derivation of the I Ching. This form of alchemy was referred to by the Philosophical Taoists as 'debased Taoism'.

Of these three 'forms' of Taoism (or practices which called themselves Taoist), Religious and Alchemical Taoism are not mentioned in the text of this work, other than where they, and similar practices, were referred to, usually indirectly, in the Chinese text (and then usually in a derisory manner).

Readers of both the I Ching and the Tao Te Ching will readily appreciate from many of Lao Tzu's statements, that he was certainly well versed in the concepts explained in the earlier work, and accepted its major precept, that all things are always in a state (or process) of change ('I Ching' means 'Book of Changes'). However, even allowing for the age of the I Ching, and the certainty that its concepts were well known in China at the time of Lao Tzu, it would seem, from historical records, that the Tao Te Ching was considered to be a perplexing book, even in the period in which it was written. Although not mentioning either Lao Tzu or the Tao Te Ching (nor the I Ching) by name, many of Chuang Tzu's stories (which are probably apocryphal) serve to illustrate and explain points from the Tao Te Ching. If there were no confusion or doubt, presumably such explanatory material would not have been required.

In its original form, the Tao Te Ching (as it is now known) is believed to have consisted of eighty-one short chapters, these being arranged in two sections, known as the 'Tao Ching' and the 'Te Ching'. The first of these was comprised of thirty-seven chapters, and the second of forty-four chapters. The length of the original work is said to have been approximately five- thousand characters, and it is probable that these were written on bamboo strips or slats, which would then have been bound together to form two scrolls, each appearing somewhat like a venetian blind with vertical slats. These were a common form of 'record' in the period of Lao Tzu, this being known as 'The Period of the Warring States'.

Since it is not known with absolute certainty that a person named 'Lao Tzu' actually lived during the period of the warring states, to categorically describe the Tao Te Ching as the work of Lao Tzu would be without sufficiently valid historical foundation. Even the 'biography of Lao Tzu' which may be found in the 'Historical Records' (Shih-chi) of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (second century B.C.) is not without its inconsistencies. This record describes Lao Tzu as having been an archivist of the Court of Chou, and further states that he is said to have personally instructed Kung Fu Tzu (Confucius).

It is in this last statement that one inconsistency may be found, for other chronicles state the date of the death of Lao Tzu to precede that of the birth of Kung Fu Tzu by nearly half a century. Even the author of the 'Historical Records' states his doubts as to the authenticity of the information available regarding Lao Tzu, and some scholars maintain that the Tao Te Ching does not present a distinctive or single point of view. They argue that it is probably a compilation or anthology of sayings from various writers and schools of thought, reaching its present form in the third century B.C.

Conversely, according to legend, it is said that on his retirement from public office, Lao Tzu headed west, and that the guardian of the pass to the state of Ch'in requested that he write a treatise on the Tao before departing. It is then that Lao Tzu is supposed to have sat for two days, in which time he wrote the Tao Te Ching, after which he left,

some writers stating that he was never heard of again, others describing his ascent to heaven in the form of a magnificent dragon.

Whichever story we believe concerning the existence of Lao Tzu, we may reasonably conclude (at least) that there is much contradictory evidence. Although I cannot offer conclusive proof that he did exist, I do not believe that the contradictions prove that such a person did not exist, and neither do I believe they prove the Tao Te Ching to have been written by more than one person. As I have stated, the reasons for my beliefs are admittedly without sufficient 'hard evidence' to withstand strong philosophical questioning, but they are offered here for those who might wish to know of an argument contrary to current academic opinion.

Since one meaning of the words 'Lao Tzu' is 'Old Man', it is very unlikely that they were used as an ordinary (or 'proper') name, but could well have been a 'nickname'. Some authorities claim that this was so in the case of the person in question, the nickname possibly being derived from the fact (?) that he was born with white hair, like that of an old man. This theory seems to be borne out by the fact that the second character, can also be used to mean 'child'. However, in the context of teaching and learning, it also means 'master' or 'scholar' (compared with 'pupil' or 'student'). Furthermore, and for the purpose of this discussion, more importantly, the same two characters which form the Chinese 'Lao Tzu' form the words 'old scholar', pronounced as 'roshi' in Japanese, a title usually reserved in that language for a master of Zen teaching.

This means that 'Lao Tzu' is the Chinese equivalent to the Japanese 'Roshi'. For this reason I believe there probably was a person called Lao Tzu, but that Lao Tzu was his title, rather than his name. It may of course be that there were many 'old scholars', all known by that title, but the existence of many has never been considered proof of the non-existence of one.

At this juncture it is perhaps necessary to mention briefly the historical and philosophical relationship between Taoism, Ch'an and Zen. The word 'Zen' is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese 'Ch'an', the system attributed to the 'Bodhidharma' (in Japanese 'Daruma'), described by followers of Zen Buddhism as the twenty-eighth Buddhist Patriarch, who is said to have arrived in China in 526 A.D. Although well known to followers of Zen, it is not always known to others that the Bodhidharma then spent nine years in the earliest Chinese Buddhist temple, which had by that time been in existence for over four hundred years. Furthermore, during that period, the original Buddhism of India had undergone many changes in China, much of its teaching having been adapted (Tibetan Buddhists might claim, 'adulterated') by its proximity to Taoism.

Today, in the West at least, the most widely known sects of Zen are Buddhist. However, even before its acceptance by Buddhists, Ch'an (or 'Zen') was accepted by the Chinese followers of Philosophical Taoism (Tao Chia) as an adjunct to their own philosophy and practices. So it was that the 'non-religious' aspects of Zen and Taoism became integrated into the system known in China as 'Ch'an Tao-chia'.

It is probable that we will never know all the reasons for this two-way integration which occurred between Tao-chia and Ch'an, but some of the reasons become apparent when we learn something of the similarities between the philosophies

underlying the two systems. It will hopefully suffice to mention that the practitioners of each group probably felt an affinity with the 'fluidity' of thought and action of the practitioners of the other, recognizing this as stemming from the same philosophical source as their own. Similarly, it is very likely that the members of both groups appreciated the 'ethics' of the other, since both philosophies emphasize the development of the individual as a prerequisite to the development of society.

Notwithstanding any inaccuracies in my own interpretation of events, of even greater historical significance is the fact that from about six hundred A.D., the survival of Philosophical Taoism was made possible only through its adoption by Ch'an. Had it not been for this fact, the antagonistic attitude of the Religious Taoists, combined with their growing governmental power, might easily have resulted in the forceful demise of Taoist Philosophy as it is known today.

As to the continued integration and co-existence of Taoism and Zen, we fortunately need look no further than the words of the great Zen scholar, Professor D.T. Suzuki, who said,

"To ask a question about Zen is to ask a question about the Tao."

All this is of course intended to illustrate the links between the two practices which use the same written characters () as a teaching name or honorary title, and that this title may have been used by the author of the Tao Te Ching wishing to retain his anonymity.

If this was the case, it could have been either for reasons of personal safety on the part of the author, or out of deference to his own teachers. Any reader who has knowledge of the history of China during the period of the warring states will readily appreciate, and hopefully sympathise with the first of these reasons, but the second reason perhaps requires some explanation. This is now offered.

Carrying out one's work in an unostentatious manner is an important aspect of Taoist teaching, as is respect for one's teachers. In some instances these two principles were adhered to so rigorously that a writer or painter might either not sign his work at all, or use a pseudonym compiled (possibly as an anagram) from the names of his most revered teachers. It is therefore possible that the author of the Tao Te Ching used the pseudonym 'Lao Tzu' as an acknowledgement of his own teacher, using the title 'old scholar' to refer to that teacher as he might have been known and referred to by his own students.

It is quite likely that the title 'Roshi', used in Zen (Japanese Ch'an) developed as an 'official title' from its earlier Chinese usage. In Zen, it is thought to be rank bad manners to use the real name of one's own teacher in a published work, at least in the context of he or she being one's own teacher (for reasons which I have attempted to explain in the 'Acknowledgements' section), but it is quite acceptable to refer to him (or her) by an honorary title. Combine any of these possibilities with the fact that one's own teacher may have been given or have chosen a 'teaching name' (a pseudonym under which a teacher may work) and it becomes easier to understand why it is impossible to be definitive regarding the 'real name' of the author or authors of the Tao Te Ching. For the purposes of this discussion however, I wish to continue from the

assumption that the Tao Te Ching did have an author, and that we may, without too much 'licence', refer to him as Lao Tzu.

The second factor which causes me to believe that we should not completely disregard the legend of the writing of the Tao Te Ching concerns its cryptic style. The basis of my belief is twofold. In the first instance, if, as legend tells us, Lao Tzu completed his writing in two days, it is not surprising that it was cryptic, since this would have required him to write at a rate of two and one half thousand words each day. It may therefore be that he wrote as succinctly as possible in order to complete his task as quickly as possible, so that he could continue on his journey into retirement.

Those who know the Tao Te Ching will also know that Lao Tzu did not teach that a task should be rushed; rather, he taught that all things should occur in their natural time. This leads to my second point regarding the cryptic style of the original work.

We know that the keeper of the pass, who made the request for a written copy of Lao Tzu's thoughts, was a well known Taoist of the period named Yin Hsi, also referred to as 'Kwan Yin'. As a Taoist, he would certainly have been familiar with the teachings of Lao Tzu, even though, as he himself is supposed to have told the old philosopher, because of the nature of his work, he had not been able to avail himself of personal tuition from the master. It could be that the 'vagueness' (or seemingly esoteric nature of the first chapter) is due to the fact that Lao Tzu would have had no reason to explain the Tao to someone who was already versed in Tao-chia.

I believe we can assume that, although possibly not nationally famous, Lao Tzu would certainly have been well known in his own province. This would certainly seem to be the case, since Yin Hsi either recognised the figure of Lao Tzu, or his name, otherwise he would not have made his request to that particular traveller.

Assuming the keeper of the pass to know something of the teaching of Lao Tzu, his request could have been made in the form of a list of questions, to which Lao Tzu might have written the answers in the form of brief (or cryptic) notes, as an 'aide memoire'. This might of course also account for the apparent discontinuity of the completed work. If the text were written in answer to a number of questions, the sequence of the text would conform to that of the questions, which might easily have been prepared by Yin Hsi over a period of time, in the hope that the occasion might arise when he would meet with a scholar such as Lao Tzu, with whom he could then discuss his questions. This could account for the apparent repetitions in the text, for two questions both phrased in a similar manner, would presumably be answered in a similar manner.

This concludes the summary of my own beliefs regarding the legend of Lao Tzu and the Tao Te Ching, other than to add the rider used frequently even by those who disagree totally with my own interpretation of the legend. This is that, irrespective of the authenticity of the legend and the problem of identifying its authorship, the majority of scholars date the origin of the text of the Tao Te Ching no later than 400 B.C. Furthermore, there is virtually no dissent among scholars as to its great value as a philosophical, literary and historical work.

NOTES ON THE INTERPRETATION

The text of the Tao Te Ching follows immediately after these notes, the arrangement following the convention set by Wan Bih in the third century A.D. Each of the eighty-one sections is shown in English, the text being as brief as English grammar will permit, whilst still retaining sensibility. The differences between my own rendering of the text and those of other translators will seem to some readers to be minor; to others they may seem radical. In either case, the reader is of course free to compare the texts by referring to those editions cited earlier in these notes.

The Chinese characters employed as chapter headings are written in a style approximating to the period in which the original text was written. The style is commonly known as 'small seal script'. Readers wishing to use modern Chinese characters for their own researches may of course refer to any or each of the Chinese texts mentioned earlier, and there are of course many others.

'Small seal script' is by no means the earliest written form of Chinese, but it is certainly one of the most aesthetically pleasing and easiest to read. Being more pictographic than later forms, the symbolism of the images contained within the small seal characters is easier to understand than it is in later forms. Modern Chinese script is virtually always more stylized, and (if hand written) frequently more 'freehand', and therefore sometimes difficult for the inexperienced reader to decipher.

Each small seal script chapter heading provides an approximate rendering of either the English title beneath or beside which it appears, or of the key concept or concepts embodied in the text of that chapter. As with the Chinese text itself, there are a number of different 'authentic' chapter headings. In most instances I have used a 'traditional' heading, but where even the traditional meaning is unclear I have used the heading I believe to be most appropriate to the contents of the chapter. Following the usual conventions, horizontally presented script should be read from left to right, and vertically presented script should be read from top to bottom, the right hand column first.

As I have stated earlier, because of the cryptic nature of the original text, and also because of the difference between the structure of English and Chinese grammar, a completely literal translation of the Chinese text would make little if any sense to the reader not versed in both the written Chinese language and the concepts of Taoism. This means that virtually any intelligible English rendering of the Tao Te Ching is bound to be longer than the original Chinese text. The variation in the length of many English (and Chinese) texts of the Tao Te Ching will be readily apparent to the reader of those translations listed in the reference section.

There are many valid arguments for and against the inclusion of commentaries on the text in any edition of the Tao Te Ching, but in this instance I hope that the English rendering will 'speak for itself', thus serving the purpose for which it is intended. It is for this reason that no separate commentaries are included.

The text in this edition is somewhat longer than that found in most other translations. There are two reasons for this, the first being that it includes certain expansions resulting from points raised in discussion by my own students. In those instances

where there was apparent lack of clarity in my original drafts, additions have been made to clarify the concepts involved. (Where additions have been made to the most commonly available Chinese and English editions, the addition and the reason for its inclusion are annotated in the appendix at the end of the book.) The second reason is the form of interpretation employed, the rationale of which is now briefly described.

I do not believe it is by accident that the Tao Te Ching can be interpreted at many different levels without contradiction. The actual interpretation placed upon the text by any translator will depend on many factors, as has already been discussed. However, there is no doubt that Tao-chia and Ch'an are both very much concerned with individual development, maintaining that this is essential to a healthy society.

It is from this particular viewpoint that the rationale for this interpretation has developed. Although other translators have certainly raised this issue, to the best of my knowledge this is the first rendering to give priority to this aspect of the Tao Te Ching. It was because my own students requested such an interpretation in English, and because we were unable to find such an interpretation that I undertook the translation and interpretation presented here.

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THE TAO AND ITS NAME

1. Naming things enables us to differentiate between them, but names are words, and words easily give rise to confusion. They do not replace the thing or direct experience of the thing which they name, but only represent or describe it.

Consider a thing such as a strawberry. If we wish to find the word 'strawberry', we look in a dictionary; if we wish to find a description of a strawberry, we look in an encyclopaedia. But if we are hungry, we do not go to the library, but to the field where fine strawberries may be found. If we do not know where there is such a field, we might seek guidance as to where fine strawberries may be found. A book on the Tao is like such a guide.

It can point us in the direction of the strawberry patch, but cannot provide the fruit itself. It can give an idea of the taste of Tao, but of itself, has no taste to compare with direct experience of the Tao.

Consider now three things: There is the universal principle which enables all things to be, and to flourish naturally; there is the name 'Tao', by which that universal principle is known; and there are words which describe the manifestations of the Tao.

Even the name 'Tao' is only a convenience, and should not be confused with the

universal principle which bears that name, for such a principle embraces all things, so cannot be accurately named nor adequately described. This means that Tao cannot be understood, for it is infinite, whereas the mind of man is finite, and that which is finite cannot encompass that which is infinite.

Although we cannot understand Tao, we are not prevented from having knowledge of it, for understanding stems from one of the two forms of knowledge.

It stems from that which is called cognitive knowledge, the knowledge born of words and numbers, and other similar devices. The other form of knowledge, conative knowledge, needs no words or other such devices, for it is the form of knowledge born of direct personal experience. So it is that conative knowledge is also known as experiential knowledge. Cognitive and experiential knowledge both have their roots in reality, but reality is complex, and complexity is more of a barrier to cognitive knowledge than it is to experiential knowledge, for when we seek cognitive knowledge of a thing, that is, understanding of it, the knowledge we gain of that thing is understanding only of its manifestations, which is not knowledge of the thing itself.

We may seek to understand a thing, rather than to experience it, because, in a world beset with man made dangers, it is frequently safer to understand than to experience. Tao is not man made, and there is nothing in it to fear. So it is that we may experience Tao without fear. When we cease to seek cognitive knowledge, that is, cease to seek understanding of a thing, we can gain experiential knowledge of that thing. This is why it is said that understanding Tao is not the same as knowing Tao; that understanding Tao is only to know that which it manifests, and that knowing Tao is to be one with the universal principle which is Tao. This is to say that knowledge of Tao is not the same as understanding Tao. To know Tao is to experience both Tao and the manifestations of that universal principle. As human beings, we are born as manifestations of Tao.

If this seems complex, the reason is because Tao is both simple and complex. It is complex when we try to understand it, and simple when we allow ourselves to experience it. Trying to understand Tao is like closing the shutters of a window before looking for a shadow. We might close the shutters to prevent anyone from discovering our treasure, but the same shutters prevent the moonlight from entering the room. All there is in the room is darkness, and in total darkness we cannot find the shadow, no matter how hard or diligently we seek.

We call one thing a shadow, and another darkness, but the shadow is darkness, and the darkness shadow, for in reality, both darkness and shadow are absence of light, yet we call one shadow and the other darkness. The shadow is darkness in the midst of light, but within total darkness, the shadow seems to disappear, for darkness is a shadow within shadows. We may think that the shadow has been destroyed when all light is removed, but it has not been wiped away; in reality it has grown, but we need light even to see that form of darkness which we call a shadow.

Such is the pursuit of the universal principle called Tao, that if we seek to understand it, we prevent the very means by which it may be found, for the only way in which we might find Tao is through the experience of Tao. We find Tao when we do not seek it, and when we seek it, it leaves us, just as the silver moonlight leaves the room when we close the shutters. We find and know Tao when we allow ourselves to find and know it,

just as the moonlight returns when we allow it to return.

We do not need to seek Tao as we seek physical treasures such as jade or gold. We do not need to seek Tao as we seek such treasures as fame or titles. We do not need to seek the treasure of Tao, for although the greatest of treasures, it is also the most common. Perhaps it is because it is so common that so few men find it; they seek it only in mysterious and secret places, in chasms and caves, and in the workplace of the alchemist. The Tao is not hidden in these places, and is hidden only from those who frequent and inhabit them, secretly, and with the shutters closed.

Just as darkness may be known as the absence of light, so too may light be known as the absence of darkness. When we experience darkness and light as having the same source, we are close to the Tao, for Tao is the source of both darkness and light, just as it is also the source of all other natural things. When we experience ourselves as part of Tao, as a shadow or reflection of the universal principle, we have found it, for it is said that "Experience of Tao is Tao".

1. KNOWLEDGE OF 'THE TAO', AND EXPERIENCE OF THE TAO.

There is a way in which we may conduct our lives without regrets, and in such a manner as assists in developing and realizing our individual potential, without harming others, or inhibiting the realization of their potential, and which is beneficial to a healthy society.

Such a way of life may of course be conducted without a name, and without description, but in order that others may know of it, and so as to distinguish it from other ways in which life may be conducted, we give it a name, and use words to describe it.

When discussing or describing this way in which life may be conducted, rather than refer to it in full, for convenience, we refer to it as 'the way', meaning simply that the discussion is concerned with this particular way, not that it is the only way of conducting one's life. In order that we might distinguish it more easily from other ways, we refer to it also by its original name, which is 'Tao'.

By intellectual intent, that is, through thought and words, and by considering ourselves as non-participating observers of this way of life, we may gain knowledge of its manifestations; but it is only through participation that we can actually experience such a way of life for ourselves.

Knowledge of anything is not the same as the thing of which we have that knowledge. When we have knowledge of a thing but do not have experience of it, in trying to describe that thing, all we can describe is our knowledge, not the thing itself. Equally, even when we have experience of a thing, all we can convey is knowledge of that experience, not the experience itself.

Knowledge and experience are both real, but they are different realities, and their relationship is frequently made complex by what distinguishes them, one from the

other. When they are used according to that which is appropriate to the situation, we may develop that way of life which enables us to pass through the barrier of such complexities. We may have knowledge of "Tao", but Tao itself can only be experienced.

2. LETTING GO OF OPPOSITES.

It is the nature of the ordinary person, the person who is not yet at one with the Tao, to compare the manifestations of the natural qualities possessed by things. Such a person tries to learn of such qualities by distinguishing between their manifestations, and so learns only of their comparative manifestations.

So it is that the ordinary person might consider one thing beautiful when compared with another which he considers to be ugly; one thing skillfully made compared with another which he considers badly made. He knows of what he has as a result of knowing what he does not have, and of that which he considers easy through that which he considers difficult. He considers one thing long by comparing it with another thing which he considers short; one thing high and another low. He knows of noise through silence and of silence through noise, and learns of that which leads through that which follows.

When such comparisons are made by a sage, that is a person who is in harmony with the Tao, that person is aware of making a judgement, and that judgements are relative to the person who makes them, and to the situation in which they are made, as much as they are relative to that which is judged.

Through the experience and knowledge through which he has gained his wisdom, the sage is aware that all things change, and that a judgement which is right in one situation might easily be wrong in another situation. He is therefore aware that he who seems to lead does not always lead, and that he who seems to follow does not always follow.

Because of this awareness, the sage frequently seems neither to lead nor follow, and often seems to do nothing, for that which he does is done without guile; it is done naturally, being neither easy nor difficult, not big or small. Because he accomplishes his task and then lets go of it without seeking credit, he cannot be discredited. Thus, his teaching lasts for ever, and he is held in high esteem.

3. WITHOUT SEEKING ACCLAIM.

The talented person who is also wise, retains humility, and so does not create rivalry. The person who possesses material things, and who does not boast of his possessions, does much to prevent stealing. Those who are jealous of talents, skills or possessions of others, easily become possessed themselves by envy.

The sage is satisfied with a sufficiency; he is not jealous, and so is free of envy. He does

not seek fame and titles, but maintains his energy and keeps himself supple. He minimizes his desires, and does not train himself in guile. He thus remains pure at heart. By acting in an uncontrived manner, the harmony of the inner world of his thoughts and the external world of his environment is maintained. He remains at peace with himself.

For these reasons, an administration which is concerned with the welfare of those whom it serves, does not encourage the seeking of status and titles; it does not create jealousy and rivalry amongst the people, but ensures that they are able to have a sufficiency, without causing them to become discontent, therefore the members of such an administration do not seek honours for themselves, nor act with guile towards the people.

4. THE UNFATHOMABLE TAO.

The mind should not be filled with desires. The individual who is at one with the Tao is aware of the distinction between that which is needed as a sufficiency, and that which is a desire, or merely wanted rather than needed.

It is the manner of the Tao that even though continuously used, it is naturally replenished, never being emptied, and never being as full as a goblet which is filled to the brim and therefore spills its fine spring water upon the ground. The Tao therefore does not waste that with which it is charged, yet always remains a source of nourishment for those who are not already so full that they cannot partake of it.

Even the finest blade will lose its sharpeness if tempered beyond its mettle. Even the most finely tempered sword is of no avail against water, and will shatter if struck against a rock. A tangled cord is of little use after it has been untangled by cutting it.

Just as a fine sword should be used only by an experienced swordsman, intellect should be tempered with experience. By this means, tangled cord may be untangled, and seemingly insoluble problems resolved; colours and hues may be harmonized to create fine paintings, and people enabled to exist in unity with each other because they no longer feel that they exist only in the shadow of the brilliance of others.

To conduct oneself without guile is to conduct oneself in a natural manner, and to do this is to be in contact with nature. By maintaining awareness of the way of nature, the wise person becomes aware of the Tao, and so becomes aware that this is how its seemingly unfathomable mysteries may be experienced.

5. TRANQUIL BUT UNCEASING.

Those things which are in opposition with each other are not benevolent towards each other, and may even treat each other with contempt or malevolence.

Although the creatures which are born of nature may be in opposition with each other,

nature itself is in opposition to nothing for there is nothing for it to oppose. It acts without conscious intention, and it is therefore neither deliberately benevolent, contemptuous nor malevolent. In this respect the way of the Tao is the same as the way of nature. Therefore, even when acting in a benevolent manner, the sage does not act from any conscious desire to be benevolent.

Through his manner of breathing like a babe, he remains free of conscious desire, and so retains his tranquility. By this means he is empty of desire, and his energy is not drained from him.

6. THE MANIFESTATION OF TAO THROUGH COMPLIMENTARY OPPOSITES

All physical things possess certain natural qualities, such as size, shape and colour. Since the universal principle encompasses all things, so it encompasses their natural qualities.

Being possessed by all things, natural qualities are general to all things, but in order to relate to a quality, we think of it as it exists relative to a particular thing, and to ourselves. We therefore think of and describe a quality according to how it is manifested through one particular thing compared with another. Thus, we judge one thing to be big, compared with another thing, which we think of as small; one person young, and another old; one sound noisy, and another quiet. Equally, we judge and compare by thinking of the aesthetic quality in terms of its manifestations, 'beautiful' or 'ugly'; morality in terms of good or bad; possession in terms of having or not having; ability in terms of ease or difficulty; length in terms of long or short; height in terms of high or low; sound in terms of noisy or quiet; light in terms of brightness or darkness.

Although many of the manifestations which we compare are judged by us to be opposites, one to the other, they are not in opposition, but are complimentary, for even extremes are nothing other than aspects or specific examples of the quality which encompasses them. Both big and small are manifestations or examples of size, young and old are examples of age, noise and quietness are aspects of sound, and brightness and darkness are extremes of light.

It is the nature of the ordinary man to compare and judge the manifestations of the naturally occurring qualities inherent in things and in situations. It is not wrong to do this, but we should not delude ourselves into believing that we thereby describe the quality rather than a manifestation of the quality.

Whilst all judgements are comparative, a judgement is frequently, if not always, relative to the individual who makes that judgement, and also to the time at which it is made. To the young child, the father may be old, but when the son reaches that age, it is unlikely that he will consider himself old. To the child, the garden fence is high, but when the child grows bigger, the same fence is low. The adult in his physical prime knows that to run ten miles, which is easy at that time, will become more difficult as he becomes older, but that the patience required to walk will become easier.

The sage knows that qualitative judgements, such as old and young, big and small, easy and difficult, or leading and following, relate as much to the person who makes that judgement, as they relate to the thing or action described. Consider a sage and an ordinary man sitting on a hill in the late evening, looking down on the road below. When darkness has fallen, they both see the light of two lanterns approaching, one yellow, the other red, bobbing gently as their bearers pass by. From the positions of the two lights, the ordinary man knows that the bearer of the yellow lantern leads the bearer of the red. As he watches, he sees the red lantern draw level with the yellow, and as they pass beneath him, the red lantern preceding the yellow.

The ordinary man wonders why the two lantern bearers do not walk side by side. The sage, who has seen what his companion has seen, thinks it right that the two travellers should do as they have done, to walk side by side through the night, neither leading and neither following the other. The sage is aware that he who seems to lead does not always lead, and that he who seems to follow does not always follow. Because of this, the sage frequently seems neither to lead nor follow, and often seems to do nothing, for that which he does is natural, being neither easy nor difficult, not big or small.

Those changes which occur naturally in life, the sage accepts as natural, accepting them as an opportunity for learning, whilst realizing that knowledge is not his possession. Because he knows that the credit for learning is due to the willingness of the student, he teaches without teaching, but by allowing his students to observe the virtue of observing natural qualities, rather than only comparing and judging their manifestations. He does this without seeking credit, and continues without contriving to be given credit. Because of this, his teaching lasts for ever, and he is held in high esteem.

The gifted person retains humility and thus prevents jealousy. The person who does not boast of his possessions prevents stealing. Only those who have greed are perplexed by envy. The wise person is therefore satisfied with a sufficiency, and is free of envy. He does not seek fame and titles, but keeps himself strong and supple. He minimizes his desires, and does not train himself in guile. He thus remains pure at heart. By acting in an uncontrived manner he maintains his inner harmony.

The Tao Te Ching

A Translation by Stan Rosenthal

1. THE EMBODIMENT OF TAO

Even the finest teaching is not the Tao itself.
Even the finest name is insufficient to define it.
Without words, the Tao can be experienced,
and without a name, it can be known.

To conduct one's life according to the Tao,
is to conduct one's life without regrets;
to realize that potential within oneself
which is of benefit to all.

Though words or names are not required
to live one's life this way,
to describe it, words and names are used,
that we might better clarify
the way of which we speak,
without confusing it with other ways
in which an individual might choose to live.

Through knowledge, intellectual thought and words,
the manifestations of the Tao are known,
but without such intellectual intent
we might experience the Tao itself.

Both knowledge and experience are real,
but reality has many forms,
which seem to cause complexity.

By using the means appropriate,
we extend ourselves beyond
the barriers of such complexity,
and so experience the Tao.

2. LETTING GO OF COMPARISONS

We cannot know the Tao itself,
nor see its qualities direct,
but only see by differentiation,

that which it manifests.

Thus, that which is seen as beautiful
is beautiful compared with that
which is seen as lacking beauty;
an action considered skilled
is so considered in comparison
with another, which seems unskilled.

That which a person knows he has
is known to him by that which he does not have,
and that which he considers difficult
seems so because of that which he can do with ease.
One thing seems long by comparison with that
which is, comparatively, short.
One thing is high because another thing is low;
only when sound ceases is quietness known,
and that which leads
is seen to lead only by being followed.
In comparison, the sage,
in harmony with the Tao,
needs no comparisons,
and when he makes them, knows
that comparisons are judgements,
and just as relative to he who makes them,
and to the situation,
as they are to that on which
the judgement has been made.

Through his experience,
the sage becomes aware that all things change,
and that he who seems to lead,
might also, in another situation, follow.
So he does nothing; he neither leads nor follows.
That which he does is neither big nor small;
without intent, it is neither difficult,
nor done with ease.
His task completed, he then lets go of it;
seeking no credit, he cannot be discredited.
Thus, his teaching lasts for ever,
and he is held in high esteem.

3. WITHOUT SEEKING ACCLAIM

By retaining his humility,
the talented person who is also wise,
reduces rivalry.

The person who possesses many things,
but does not boast of his possessions,
reduces temptation, and reduces stealing.

Those who are jealous of the skills or things
possessed by others,
most easily themselves become possessed by envy.

Satisfied with his possessions,
the sage eliminates the need to steal;
at one with the Tao,
he remains free of envy,
and has no need of titles.

By being supple, he retains his energy.
He minimizes his desires,
and does not train himself in guile,
nor subtle words of praise.
By not contriving, he retains
the harmony of his inner world,
and so remains at peace within himself.

It is for reasons such as these,
that an administration
which is concerned
with the welfare of those it serves,
does not encourage status
and titles to be sought,
nor encourage rivalry.

Ensuring a sufficiency for all,
helps in reducing discontent.

Administrators who are wise
do not seek honours for themselves,
nor act with guile
towards the ones they serve.

4. THE UNFATHOMABLE TAO

It is the nature of the Tao,
that even though used continuously,
it is replenished naturally,
never being emptied,
and never being over-filled,
as is a goblet
which spills its contents
upon the ground.

The Tao therefore cannot be said
to waste its charge,
but constantly remains
a source of nourishment
for those who are not so full of self
as to be unable to partake of it.
When tempered beyond its natural state,
the finest blade will lose its edge.
Even the hardest tempered sword,
against water, is of no avail,
and will shatter if struck against a rock.
When untangled by a cutting edge,
the cord in little pieces lies,
and is of little use.

Just as the finest swordsmith
tempers the finest blade
with his experience,
so the sage, with wisdom, tempers intellect.
With patience, tangled cord may be undone,
and problems which seem insoluble, resolved.

With wise administrators, all can exist in unity,
each with the other,
because no man need feel that he exists,
only as the shadow of his brilliant brother.

Through conduct not contrived for gain,
awareness of the Tao may be maintained.
This is how its mysteries may be found.

5. WITHOUT INTENTION

Nature acts without intent,
so cannot be described
as acting with benevolence,
nor malevolence to any thing.

In this respect, the Tao is just the same,
though in reality it should be said
that nature follows the rule of Tao.

Therefore, even when he seems to act
in manner kind or benevolent,
the sage is not acting with such intent,
for in conscious matters such as these,
he is amoral and indifferent.

The sage retains tranquility,
and is not by speech or thought disturbed,
and even less by action which is contrived.
His actions are spontaneous,
as are his deeds towards his fellow men.

By this means he is empty of desire,
and his energy is not drained from him.

6. COMPLETION

Like the sheltered, fertile valley,
the meditative mind is still,
yet retains its energy.

Since both energy and stillness,
of themselves, do not have form,
it is not through the senses
that they may be found,
nor understood by intellect alone,
although, in nature, both abound.

In the meditative state,
the mind ceases to differentiate
between existences,
and that which may or may not be.
It leaves them well alone,
for they exist,
not differentiated, but as one,
within the meditative mind.

7. SHEATHING THE LIGHT

When living by the Tao,
awareness of self is not required,
for in this way of life, the self exists,
and is also non-existent,
being conceived of, not as an existentiality,
nor as non-existent.

The sage does not contrive to find his self,
for he knows that all which may be found of it,
is that which it manifests to sense and thought,
which side by side with self itself, is nought.

It is by sheathing intellect's bright light
that the sage remains at one with his own self,
ceasing to be aware of it, by placing it behind.

Detached, he is unified with his external world,
by being selfless he is fulfilled;
thus his selfhood is assured.

8. THE WAY OF WATER

Great good is said to be like water,
sustaining life with no conscious striving,
flowing naturally, providing nourishment,
found even in places
which desiring man rejects.

In this way
it is like the Tao itself.

Like water, the sage abides in a humble place;
in meditation, without desire;
in thoughtfulness, he is profound,
and in his dealings, kind.
In speech, sincerity guides the man of Tao,
and as a leader, he is just.
In management, competence is his aim,
and he ensures the pacing is correct.

Because he does not act for his own ends,
nor cause unnecessary conflict,
he is held to be correct
in his actions towards his fellow man.

9. WITHOUT EXTREMES

The cup is easier to hold
when not filled to overflowing.

The blade is more effective
if not tempered beyond its mettle.

Gold and jade are easier to protect
if possessed in moderation.

He who seeks titles,

invites his own downfall.

The sage works quietly,
seeking neither praise nor fame;
completing what he does with natural ease,
and then retiring.
This is the way and nature of Tao.

10. CLEANING THE DARK MIRROR

Maintaining unity is virtuous,
for the inner world of thought is one
with the external world
of action and of things.

The sage avoids their separation,
by breathing as the sleeping babe,
and thus maintaining harmony.

He cleans the dark mirror of his mind,
so that it reflects without intent.
He conducts himself without contriving,
loving the people, and not interfering.

He cultivates without possessing,
thus providing nourishment,
he remains receptive
to changing needs,
and creates without desire.

By leading from behind,
attending to that
which must be done,
he is said to have attained
the mystic state.

11. THE UTILITY OF NON-EXISTENCE

Though thirty spokes may form the wheel,
it is the hole within the hub
which gives the wheel utility.

It is not the clay the potter throws,
which gives the pot its usefulness,
but the space within the shape,

from which the pot is made.

Without a door, the room cannot be entered,
and without windows it is dark.

Such is the utility of non-existence.

12. THE REPRESSION OF DESIRES

Through sight, the colours may be seen,
but too much colour blinds us.
Apprehending the tones of sound,
too much sound might make us deaf,
and too much flavour deadens taste.
When hunting for sport, and chasing for pleasure,
the mind easily becomes perplexed.
He who collects treasures for himself
more easily becomes anxious.

The wise person fulfills his needs,
rather than sensory temptations.

13. UNMOVED AND UNMOVING

The ordinary man seeks honour, not dishonour,
cherishing success and abominating failure,
loving life, whilst fearing death.
The sage does not recognise these things,
so lives his life quite simply.

The ordinary man seeks to make himself
the centre of his universe;
the universe of the sage is at his centre.
He loves the world, and thus remains unmoved
by things with which others are concerned.
He acts with humility, is neither moved nor moving,
and can therefore be trusted in caring for all things.

14. EXPERIENCING THE MYSTERY

The Tao is abstract,
and therefore has no form,

it is neither bright in rising,
nor dark in sinking,
cannot be grasped, and makes no sound.

Without form or image, without existence,
the form of the formless, is beyond defining,
cannot be described,
and is beyond our understanding.
It cannot be called by any name.

Standing before it, it has no beginning;
even when followed, it has no end.
In the now, it exists; to the present apply it,
follow it well, and reach its beginning.

15. THE MANIFESTATION OF THE TAO IN MAN

The sage of old was profound and wise;
like a man at a ford, he took great care,
alert, perceptive and aware.

Desiring nothing for himself,
and having no desire
for change for its own sake,
his actions were difficult to understand.

Being watchful, he had no fear of danger;
being responsive, he had no need of fear.

He was courteous like a visiting guest,
and as yielding as the springtime ice.
Having no desires, he was untouched by craving.

Receptive and mysterious,
his knowledge was unfathomable,
causing others to think him hesitant.

Pure in heart, like uncut jade,
he cleared the muddy water
by leaving it alone.

By remaining calm and active,
the need for renewing is reduced.

16. RETURNING TO THE ROOT

**It is only by means of being
that non-being may be found.**

**When society changes
from its natural state of flux,
to that which seems like chaos,
the inner world of the superior man
remains uncluttered and at peace.
By remaining still, his self detached,
he aids society in its return
to the way of nature and of peace.
The value of his insight may be clearly seen
when chaos ceases.**

**Being one with the Tao is to be at peace,
and to be in conflict with it,
leads to chaos and dysfunction.**

**When the consistency of the Tao is known,
the mind is receptive to its states of change.**

**It is by being at one with the Tao,
that the sage holds no prejudice
against his fellow man.
If accepted as a leader of men,
he is held in high esteem.**

**Throughout his life,
both being and non-being,
the Tao protects him.**

17. LEADERSHIP BY EXCEPTION

**Man cannot comprehend the infinite;
only knowing that the best exists,
the second best is seen and praised,
and the next, despised and feared.**

**The sage does not expect that others
use his criteria as their own.**

**The existence of the leader who is wise
is barely known to those he leads.
He acts without unnecessary speech,
so that the people say,**

"It happened of its own accord".

18. THE DECAY OF ETHICS

**When the way of the Tao is forgotten,
kindness and ethics need to be taught;
men learn to pretend to be wise and good.**

**All too often in the lives of men,
filial piety and devotion
arise only after conflict and strife,
just as loyal ministers all too often appear,
when the people are suppressed.**

19. RETURNING TO NATURALNESS

**It is better merely to live one's life,
realizing one's potential,
rather than wishing
for sanctification.**

**He who lives in filial piety and love
has no need of ethical teaching.**

**When cunning and profit are renounced,
stealing and fraud will disappear.
But ethics and kindness, and even wisdom,
are insufficient in themselves.**

**Better by far to see the simplicity
of raw silk's beauty
and the uncarved block;
to be one with oneself,
and with one's brother.**

**It is better by far
to be one with the Tao,
developing selflessness,
tempering desire,
removing the wish,
but being compassionate.**

20. BEING DIFFERENT FROM ORDINARY MEN

The sage is often envied
because others do not know
that although he is nourished by the Tao,
like them, he too is mortal.

He who seeks wisdom is well advised
to give up academic ways,
and put an end to striving.
Then he will learn that yes and no
are distinguished only by distinction.

It is to the advantage of the sage
that he does not fear what others fear,
but it is to the advantage of others
that they can enjoy the feast,
or go walking, free of hindrance,
through the terraced park in spring.

The sage drifts like a cloud,
having no specific place.
Like a newborn babe before it smiles,
he does not seek to communicate.
In the eyes of those
who have more than they need,
the sage has nothing, and is a fool,
prizing only that which of the Tao is born.

The sage may seem to be perplexed,
being neither bright nor clear,
and to himself, sometimes he seems
both dull and weak, confused and shy.
Like the ocean at night,
he is serene and quiet,
but as penetrating as the winter wind.

21. FINDING THE ESSENCE OF TAO

The greatest virtue is to follow the Tao;
how it achieves ! without contriving.

The essence of Tao is dark and mysterious,
having, itself, no image or form.
Yet through its non-being,
are found image and form.
The essence of Tao is deep and unfathomable,
yet it may be known by not trying to know.

22. YIELDING TO MAINTAIN INTEGRITY

**Yield, and maintain integrity.
To bend is to be upright;
to be empty is to be full.**

**Those who have little have much to gain,
but those who have much
may be confused by possessions.**

**The wise man embraces the all encompassing;
he is unaware of himself, and so has brilliance;
not defending himself, he gains distinction;
not seeking fame, he receives recognition;
not making false claims, he does not falter;
and not being quarrelsome,
is in conflict with no one.**

**This is why it was said by the sages of old,
"Yield, and maintain integrity;
be whole, and all things come to you".**

23. ACCEPTING THE IRREVOCABLE

**Nature's way is to say but little;
high winds are made still
with the turn of the tide,
and rarely last all morning,
nor heavy rain, all day.
Therefore, when talking,
remember also
to be silent and still.**

**He who follows the natural way
is always one with the Tao.
He who is virtuous may experience virtue,
whilst he who loses the natural way
is easily lost himself.**

**He who is at one with the Tao
is at one with nature,
and virtue always exists for he who has virtue.**

To accept the irrevocable

is to let go of desire.

**He who does not have trust in others
should not himself be trusted.**

24. EXCESS

**He who stretches
beyond his natural reach,
does not stand firmly
upon the ground;
just as he
who travels at a speed
beyond his means,
cannot maintain his pace.**

**He who boasts
is not enlightened,
and he who is self-righteous
does not gain respect
from those who are meritorious;
thus, he gains nothing,
and will fall into disrepute.**

**Since striving,
boasting and self-righteousness,
are all unnecessary traits,
the sage considers them excesses,
and has no need of them.**

25. THE CREATIVE PRINCIPLE OF TAO

**The creative principle unifies
the inner and external worlds.
It does not depend on time or space,
is ever still and yet in motion;
thereby it creates all things,
and is therefore called
'the creative and the absolute';
its ebb and its flow extend to infinity.**

**We describe the Tao as being great;
we describe the universe as great;
nature too, we describe as great,
and man himself is great.**

Man's laws should follow natural laws,

just as nature gives rise to physical laws,
whilst following from universal law,
which follows the Tao.

26. CENTRING

The natural way is the way of the sage,
serving as his dwelling,
providing his centre deep within,
whether in his home or journeying.

Even when he travels far,
he is not separate
from his own true nature.
Maintaining awareness of natural beauty,
he still does not forget his purpose.

Although he may dwell in a grand estate,
simplicity remains his guide,
for he is full aware, that losing it,
his roots as well would disappear.
So he is not restless,
lest he loses the natural way.

Similarly, the people's leader
is not flippant in his role, nor restless,
for these could cause the loss
of the roots of leadership.

27. FOLLOWING THE TAO

The sage follows the natural way,
doing what is required of him.

Like an experienced tracker,
he leaves no tracks;
like a good speaker, his speech is fluent;
He makes no error, so needs no tally;
like a good door, which needs no lock,
he is open when it is required of him,
and closed at other times;
like a good binding, he is secure,
without the need of borders.

Knowing that virtue may grow from example,

**this is the way in which the sage teaches,
abandoning no one who stops to listen.
Thus, from experience of the sage,
all might learn, and so might gain.**

**There is mutual respect twixt teacher and pupil,
for, without respect, there would be confusion.**

28. RETAINING INTEGRITY

**Whilst developing creativity,
also cultivate receptivity.
Retain the mind like that of a child,
which flows like running water.**

**When considering any thing,
do not lose its opposite.
When thinking of the finite,
do not forget infinity;**

**Act with honour, but retain humility.
By acting according to the way of the Tao,
set others an example.**

**By retaining the integrity
of the inner and external worlds,
true selfhood is maintained,
and the inner world made fertile.**

29. TAKING NO ACTION

**The external world is fragile,
and he who meddles with its natural way,
risks causing damage to himself.
He who tries to grasp it,
thereby loses it.**

**It is natural for things to change,
sometimes being ahead, sometimes behind.**

**There are times when even breathing
may be difficult,
whereas its natural state is easy.**

Sometimes one is strong,
and sometimes weak,
sometimes healthy,
and sometimes sick,
sometimes is first,
and at other times behind.

The sage does not try
to change the world by force,
for he knows that force results in force.
He avoids extremes and excesses,
and does not become complacent.

30. A CAVEAT AGAINST VIOLENCE

When leading by the way of the Tao,
abominate the use of force,
for it causes resistance, and loss of strength,
showing the Tao has not been followed well.
Achieve results but not through violence,
for it is against the natural way,
and damages both others' and one's own true self.

The harvest is destroyed in the wake of a great war,
and weeds grow in the fields in the wake of the army.

The wise leader achieves results,
but does not glory in them;
is not proud of his victories,
and does not boast of them.
He knows that boasting is not the natural way,
and that he who goes against that way,
will fail in his endeavours.

31. MAINTAINING PEACE

Weapons of war are instruments of fear,
and are abhorred by those who follow the Tao.
The leader who follows the natural way
does not abide them.

The warrior king leans to his right,
from whence there comes his generals' advice,
but the peaceful king looks to his left,
where sits his counsellor of peace.

When he looks to his left, it is a time of peace,
and when to the right, a time for sorrow.

Weapons of war are instruments of fear,
and are not favoured by the wise,
who use them only when there is no choice,
for peace and stillness are dear to their hearts,
and victory causes them no rejoicing.

To rejoice in victory is to delight in killing;
to delight in killing is to have no self-being.

The conduct of war is that of a funeral;
when people are killed, it is a time of mourning.
This is why even victorious battle
should be observed without rejoicing.

32. IF THE TAO WERE OBSERVED

The Tao is eternal, but does not have fame;
like the uncarved block, its worth seems small,
though its value to man is beyond all measure.
Were it definable, it could then be used
to obviate conflict, and the need
to teach the way of the Tao;
all men would abide in the peace of the Tao;
sweet dew would descend to nourish the earth.

When the Tao is divided,
there is a need for names,
for, like the block which is carved,
its parts then are seen.

By stopping in time
from torment and conflict,
strife is defeated, and danger averted.
The people then seek the wisdom of Tao,
just as all rivers flow to the great sea.

33. WITHOUT FORCE: WITHOUT PERISHING

Knowledge frequently results
from knowing others,
but the man who is awakened,
has seen the uncarved block.

**Others might be mastered by force,
but to master one's self
requires the Tao.**

**He who has many material things,
may be described as rich,
but he who knows he has enough,
and is at one with the Tao,
might have enough of material things,
and have self-being as well.**

**Will-power may bring perseverance;
but to have tranquility is to endure,
being protected for all his days.**

**He whose ideas remain in the world,
is present for all time.**

34. WITHOUT CONTRIVING

**All things may act, without exclusion,
according to the natural way,
which fulfills its purpose silently,
and with no claim.
Being an aspect of natural order,
it is not the ruler of any thing,
but remains the source of their nourishment.
It cannot be seen; it has no intention,
but all natural things rely on its presence.
When all things return to it,
it does not enslave them,
so unmanifested, its greatness prevails.**

**Modelling himself upon the Tao,
he who is wise, does not contrive,
but is content with what he achieves.**

35. THE BENEVOLENT HOST

**The wise man acts at one with the Tao,
for he knows it is here that peace is found.
It is for this reason that he is sought.**

**Whilst guests enjoy good music and food,
as these are supplied by a benevolent host,**

a description of Tao seems without form,
for it cannot be heard and cannot be seen.
But when the music and food are all ended,
the taste of the Tao still remains.

36. OVERCOMING

It is the way of the Tao,
that things which expand might also shrink;
that he who is strong, will at some time be weak,
that he who is raised will then be cast down,
and that all men have a need to give,
and also have a need to receive.

The biggest fish stay deep in the pond,
and a country's best weapons
should be kept locked away.
That which is soft and supple,
may overcome the hard and strong.

37. THE EXERCISE OF LEADERSHIP

The way of nature is not contrived,
yet nothing which is required
is left undone.

Observing nature, the wise leader knows this,
and replaces desire with dispassion,
thus saving that energy, otherwise spent,
which has not been wasted away.

The wise leader knows
his actions must be
without the use of forced energy.

He knows that more
is still required,
for he also knows
that he must act
without deliberate intent,
of having no intention.

To act without contrived intent
is to act without contriving,
and is the way of nature,

and so is the way of the Tao.

38. THE CONCERNS OF THE GREAT

A truly good man is unaware
of the good deeds he performs.
Conversely, a foolish man must try
continuously to be good.

A good man seems to do little or nought,
yet he leaves nothing undone.
A foolish man must always strive,
whilst leaving much undone.

The man who is truly wise and kind
leaves nothing to be done,
but he who only acts
according to his nation's law
leaves many things undone.

A disciplinarian wanting something done
rolls up his sleeves,
enforcing it with violence.

It may be that goodness still remains,
even when the natural way is lost,
and that kindness still exists
when goodness is forgotten.
It may be that justice still remains
when the people are no longer kind,
and when this is lost, that ritual still remains.
However, ritual may be performed
only as an act of faith,
and may be the beginning of confusion,
for even divination and the such
are but the flowery trappings of the Tao,
and are the beginning of great folly.

He who is truly great
does not upon the surface dwell,
but on what lies beneath.
It is said that the fruit is his concern,
rather than the flower.
Each must decide what it might be he seeks,
the flowery trapping,
which comes to summer fullness first,
or the fruit which is beneath.

39. SUFFICIENCY AND QUIETNESS

From the principle which is called the Tao,
the sky, the earth, and creativity are one,
the sky is clear, the earth is firm,
and the spirit of the inner world is full.

When the ruler of the land is whole,
the nation too is strong, alive and well,
and the people have sufficient
to meet their earthly needs.

When the daytime sky is dark
and overcast like night,
the nation and its people
will surely suffer much.

The firmness of the dew filled earth
gives it its life;
the energy of the inner world
prevents its becoming drained of strength;
its fullness prevents it running dry.
The growth of all things
prevents their dying.

The work of the leader should ensure
the prosperity of the populace.
So it is said,

"humility is the root
of great nobility;
the low forms a foundation
for the great;
and princes consider themselves
to be of little worth".
Each depends on humility therefore;
it is of no advantage to have too much success,
so do not sound loudly like jade bells,
nor clatter like stone chimes.

40. BEING AND NOT BEING

The motion of nature
is cyclic and returning.
Its way is to yield,

for to yield is to become.
All things are born of being;
being is born of non-being.

41. SAMENESS AND DIFFERENCE

On hearing of the Tao,
the wise student's practice is with diligence;
the average student attends to his practice
when his memory reminds him so to do;
and the foolish student laughs.
But we do well to remember
that with no sudden laughter,
there would be no natural way.

Thus it is said,

"There are times when even brightness seems dim;
when progress seems like regression;
when the easy seems most difficult,
and virtue seems empty, inadequate and frail;
times when purity seems sullied;
when even reality seems unreal,
and when a square seems to have corners;
when even great talent is of no avail,
and the highest note cannot be heard;
when the formed seems formless,
and when the way of nature is out of sight".
Even in such times as these,
the natural way still nourishes,
that all things may be fulfilled.

42. THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE TAO

The Tao existed before its name,
and from its name, the opposites evolved,
giving rise to three divisions,
and then to names abundant.

These things embrace receptively,
achieving inner harmony,
and by their unity create
the inner world of man.

No man wishes to be seen

as worthless in another's eyes,
but the wise leader describes himself this way,
for he knows that one may gain by losing,
and lose by gaining,
and that a violent man
will not die a natural death.

43. AT ONE WITH TAO

Only the soft overcomes the hard,
by yielding, bringing it to peace.
Even where there is no space,
that which has no substance enters in.

Through these things is shown
the value of the natural way.
The wise man understands full well,
that wordless teaching can take place,
and that actions should occur
without the wish for self-advancement.

44. SUFFICIENCY

A contented man knows himself to be
more precious even than fame,
and so, obscure, remains.

He who is more attached to wealth
than to himself,
suffers more heavily from loss.

He who knows when to stop, might lose,
but in safety stays.

45. CHANGES

In retrospect, even those accomplishments
which seemed perfect when accomplished,
may seem imperfect and ill formed,
but this does not mean that such accomplishments
have outlived their usefulness.

That which once seemed full,
may later empty seem,
yet still be unexhausted.
That which once seemed straight
may seem twisted when seen once more;
intelligence can seem stupid,
and eloquence seem awkward;
movement may overcome the cold,
and stillness, heat,
but stillness in movement
is the way of the Tao.

46. MODERATING DESIRE AND AMBITION

When the way of nature is observed,
all things serve their function;
horses drawing carts, and pulling at the plough.
But when the natural way is not observed,
horses are bred for battle and for war.

Desire and wanting cause discontent,
whilst he who knows sufficiency
more easily has what he requires.

47. DISCOVERING THE DISTANT

The Tao may be known and observed
without the need of travel;
the way of the heavens might be well seen
without looking through a window.

The further one travels,
the less one knows.
So, without looking, the sage sees all,
and by working without self-advancing thought,
he discovers the wholeness of the Tao.

48. FORGETTING KNOWLEDGE

When pursuing knowledge,
something new is acquired each day.
But when pursuing the way of the Tao,

something is subtracted;
less striving occurs,
until there is no striving.

When effort is uncontrived,
nothing is left undone;
the way of nature rules
by allowing things to take their course,
not by contriving to change.

49. THE VIRTUE OF RECEPTIVITY

The sage is not mindful for himself,
but is receptive to others' needs.
Knowing that virtue requires great faith,
he has that faith, and is good to all;
irrespective of others' deeds,
he treats them according to their needs.

He has humility and is shy,
thus confusing other men.
They see him as they might a child,
and sometimes listen to his words.

50. THE VALUE SET ON LIFE

In looking at the people, we might see
that in the space twixt birth and death,
one third follow life, and one third death,
and those who merely pass from birth to death,
are also one third of those we see.

He who lives by the way of the Tao,
travels without fear of ferocious beasts,
and will not be pierced in an affray,
for he offers no resistance.
The universe is the centre of his world,
so in the inner world
of he who lives within the Tao,
there is no place
where death can enter in.

51. THE NOURISHMENT OF THE TAO

All physical things arise
from the principle which is absolute;
the principle which is the natural way.

All living things are formed by being,
and shaped by their environment,
growing if nourished well by virtue;
the being from non-being.

All natural things respect the Tao,
giving honour to its virtue,
although the Tao does not expect,
nor look for honour or respect.

The virtue of the natural way
is that all things are born of it;
it nourishes and comforts them;
develops, shelters and cares for them,
protecting them from harm.

The Tao creates, not claiming credit,
and guides without interfering.

52. RETURNING TO THE SOURCE

The virtue of Tao governs its natural way.
Thus, he who is at one with it,
is one with everything which lives,
having freedom from the fear of death.

Boasting, and hurrying hither and thither,
destroy the enjoyment of a peace filled life.

Life is more fulfilled by far,
for he who does not have desire,
for he does not have desire,
has no need of boasting.

Learn to see the insignificant and small,
grow in wisdom and develop insight,
that which is irrevocable,
do not try to fight,
and so be saved from harm.

53. EVIDENCE

When temptation arises to leave the Tao,
banish temptation, stay with the Tao.

When the court has adornments in profusion,
the fields are full of weeds,
and the granaries are bare.
It is not the way of nature to carry a sword,
nor to over-adorn oneself,
nor to have more than a sufficiency
of fine food and drink.

He who has more possessions than he can use,
deprives someone who could use them well.

54. CULTIVATING INSIGHT

That which is firmly rooted,
is not easily torn from the ground;
just as that which is firmly grasped,
does not slip easily from the hand.

The virtue of the Tao is real,
if cultivated in oneself;
when loved in the family, it abounds;
when throughout the village, it will grow;
and in the nation, be abundant.
When it is real universally,
virtue is in all people.

All things are microcosms of the Tao;
the world a microcosmic universe,
the nation a microcosm of the world,
the village a microcosmic nation;
the family a village in microcosmic view,
and the body a microcosm of one's own family;
from single cell to galaxy.

55. MYSTERIOUS VIRTUE

He who has virtue is like a newborn child,
free from attack by those who dwell

in the way of nature, the way of the Tao.

The bones of the newborn child are soft,
his muscles supple, but his grip is firm;
he is whole, though not knowing he was born
of the creative and receptive way.
The way of nature is in the child,
so even when he shouts all day,
his throat does not grow hoarse or dry.

From constancy, there develops harmony,
and from harmony, enlightenment.

It is unwise to rush from here to there.
To hold one's breath causes the body strain;
exhaustion follows
when too much energy is used,
for this is not the natural way.

He who is in opposition to the Tao
does not live his natural years.

56. VIRTUOUS PASSIVITY

Those who know the natural way
have no need of boasting,
whilst those who know but little,
may be heard most frequently;
thus, the sage says little,
if anything at all.

Not demanding stimuli,
he tempers his sharpness well,
reduces the complex to simplicity,
hiding his brilliance, seemingly dull;
he settles the dust,
whilst in union with all natural things.

He who has attained enlightenment
(without contriving so to do)
is not concerned with making friends,
nor with making enemies;
with good or harm, with praise or blame.
Such detachment is the highest state of man.

57. SIMPLIFICATION

With natural justice, people must be ruled,
and if war be waged, strategy and tactics used.
To master one's self,
one must act without cunning.

The greater the number of laws and restrictions,
the poorer the people who inhabit the land.
The sharper the weapons of battle and war,
the greater the troubles besetting the land.
The greater the cunning with which people are ruled,
the stranger the things which occur in the land.
The harder the rules and regulations,
the greater the number of those who will steal.

The sage therefore does not contrive,
in order to bring about reform,
but teaches the people peace of mind,
in order that they might enjoy their lives.
Having no desires, all he does is natural.
Since he teaches self-sufficiency,
the people who follow him return
to a good, uncomplicated life.

58. TRANSFORMATIONS ACCORDING TO CIRCUMSTANCES

When the hand of the ruler is light,
the people do not contrive,
but when the country is severely ruled,
the people grow in cunning.

The actions of the sage are sharp,
but they are never cutting,
they are pointed, though never piercing,
they are straightforward, not contrived,
and not without restraint,
brilliant but not blinding.
This is the action of the sage,
because he is aware
that where happiness exists,
there is also misery and strife;
that where honesty may be found,
there is occasion for dishonesty,
and that men may be beguiled.

The sage knows that no-one can foretell
just what the future holds.

59. GUARDING THE TAO

By acting with no thought of self-advancement,
but with self-restraint,
it is possible to lead,
and genuinely care for others.
This happens by acting virtuously,
and leaving nothing to be done.

A foundation virtuous and firm,
rooted in receptivity,
is a prerequisite of good leadership,
and for a life both long and strong.
He whose virtue knows no limit,
is most fitting to lead.
His roots are deep,
and his life protected
by his meditative practice,
as the bark protects the tree.

60. RULING

To rule a country,
one must act with care,
as when frying the smallest fish.

If actions are approached,
and carried out in the natural way,
the power of evil is reduced,
and so the ruler and the ruled
are equally protected.
They will not contrive to harm each other,
for the virtue of one refreshes the other.

61. HUMILITY

A great country remains receptive and still,
as does a rich and fertile land.
The gentle overcomes the strong
with stillness and receptivity.

By giving way to the other,
one country may conquer another;
a small country may submit to a large,
and conquer it, though having no arms.

Those who conquer must be willing to yield;
to yield may be to overcome.

A fertile nation may require a greater population,
to use its resources to the full,
whilst the country without such natural wealth
may require them to meet its people's needs.
By acting in unity, each may achieve
that which it requires.

62. SHARING THE TREASURE

The source of all things is in the Tao.
It is a treasure for the good,
and a refuge for all in need.

Whilst praise can buy titles,
good deeds gain respect.

No man should be abandoned
because he has not found the Tao.

On auspicious occasions, when gifts are sent,
rather than sending horses or jade,
send the teaching of Tao.

When we first discover the natural way,
we are happy to know that our misdeeds
are in the past, where they belong,
and so are happy to realize
that we have found a treasure.

63. BEGINNING AND COMPLETING

Act without contriving;
work naturally, and taste the tasteless;
magnify the small; increase the few,
and reward bitterness with care.
Seek the simple in the complex,
and achieve greatness in small things.

It is the way of nature
that even difficult things are done with ease,
and great acts made up of smaller deeds.
The sage achieves greatness by small deeds multiplied.

Promises easily made are most easily broken,
and acting with insufficient care
causes subsequent trouble.
The sage confronts problems as they arise,
so that they do not trouble him.

64. STAYING WITH THE MYSTERY

If problems are accepted,
and dealt with before they arise,
they might even be prevented before confusion begins,
In this way peace may be maintained.

The brittle is easily shattered,
and the small is easily scattered.
Great trees grow from the smallest shoots;
a terraced garden, from a pile of earth,
and a journey of a thousand miles
begins by taking the initial step.

He who contrives, defeats his purpose;
and he who is grasping, loses.
The sage does not contrive to win,
and therefore is not defeated;
he is not grasping, so does not lose.

It is easy to fail when nearing completion,
therefore, take care right to the end,
not only in the beginning.

The sage seeks freedom from desire,
not grasping at ideas.
He brings men back when they are lost,
and helps them find the Tao.

65. VIRTUOUS GOVERNMENT

Knowing it is against the Tao
to try to enforce learning,
the early sages did not contrive

to teach the way of the Tao.

There are two ways of government.
One is to be cunning, to act with guile,
and to contrive to cheat the people.
When this way is used to rule,
the people grow in cunning,
and contrive to cheat the ruler.

The second way to govern the land,
is to do so without contriving.
People so governed are truly blessed,
for they are governed with virtue,
and virtuous government is fair to all,
thus leading to unity.

66. LEADING FROM BEHIND

The sea is the ruler of river and stream,
because it rules from well beneath.

The teacher guides his students best,
by allowing them to lead.

When the ruler is a sage,
the people do not feel oppressed;
they support the one who rules them well,
and never tire of him.

He who is non-competitive
invites no competition.

67. THE THREE PRECIOUS ATTRIBUTES

Those who follow the natural way
are different from others in three respects.
They have great mercy and economy,
and the courage not to compete.
From mercy there comes courage;
from economy, generosity;
and from humility, willingness to lead from behind.

It is the way of sickness to shun the merciful,
and to acclaim only heroic deeds,
to abandon economy, and to be selfish.

**They are sick, who are not humble,
but try always to be first.**

**Only he who is compassionate
can show true bravery,
and in defending, show great strength.
Compassion is the means by which
mankind may be guarded and saved,
for heaven arms with compassion,
those whom it would not see destroyed.**

68. WITHOUT DESIRE

**An effective warrior acts
not from nihilistic anger,
nor from desire to kill.**

**He who wins should not be vengeful.
An employer should have humility.**

**If we wish for peace and unity,
our dealings with our fellow man
must be without desire for self-advantage,
and carried out without contention.**

69. THE USE OF THE MYSTERIOUS TAO

**Arguments may be won by waiting,
rather than making an aggressive move;
by withdrawing rather than advancing.**

**By moving without appearing to move,
by not making a show of strength,
but by conserving it well;
by capturing without attacking,
by being armed, but with no weapons,
great battles may be won.**

**Do not underestimate
those you enjoin in battle,
for this can result in losing
what is of greatest value.
When a battle is enjoined,
by remembering this,
the weaker may still win.**

70. HIDDEN IDENTITY

Though the words of the sage are simple,
and his actions easily performed,
they are few among many,
who can speak or act as a sage.

For the ordinary man it is difficult
to know the way of a sage,
perhaps because his words
are from the distant past,
and his actions naturally disposed.

Those who know the way of the sage
are few and far between,
but those who treat him with honesty,
will be honoured by him and the Tao.

He knows he makes no fine display,
and wears rough clothes, not finery.
It is not in his expectancy of men
that they should understand his ways,
for he carries his jade within his heart.

71. WITHOUT SICKNESS

To acknowledge one's ignorance
shows strength of personality,
but to ignore wisdom is a sign of weakness.

To be sick of sickness is a sign of good health,
therefore the wise man grows sick of sickness,
and sick of being sick of sickness,
'til he is sick no more.

72. LOVING THE SELF

The sage retains a sense of awe, and of propriety.
He does not intrude into others' homes;
does not harass them,
nor interfere without request,
unless they damage others.

So it is that they return to him.

**'Though the sage knows himself
he makes no show of it;
he has self-respect, but is not arrogant,
for he develops the ability to let go of that
which he no longer needs.**

73. ACTING WITH A SUFFICIENCY

**A brave man who is passionate
will either kill or be killed,
but a man who is both brave and still
might preserve his own and others' lives.
No one can say with certainty,
why it is better to preserve a life.**

**The virtuous way is a way to act
without contriving effort,
yet, without contriving it overcomes.
It seldom speaks, and never asks,
but is answered without a question.
It is supplied with all its needs
and is constantly at ease
because it follows its own plan
which cannot be understood by man.
It casts its net both deep and wide,
and 'though coarse meshed, it misses nothing in the tide.**

74. USURPING THE TAO

**If the people are not afraid of death,
they have no fear of threats of death.**

**If early death is common in the land,
and if death is meted out as punishment,
the people do not fear to break the law.**

**To be the executioner in such a land as this,
is to be as an unskilled carpenter
who cuts his hand
when trying to cut wood.**

75. INJURING THROUGH GREED

**When taxes are too heavy,
hunger lays the people low.
When those who govern interfere too much,
the people become rebellious.**

**When those who govern demand too much
of people's lives, death is taken lightly.
When the people are starving in the land,
life is of little value,
and so is more easily sacrificed by them
in overthrowing government.**

76. AGAINST TRUSTING IN STRENGTH

**Man is born gentle and supple.
At death, his body is brittle and hard.
Living plants are tender,
and filled with life-giving sap,
but at their death they are withered and dry.**

**The stiff, the hard, and brittle
are harbingers of death,
and gentleness and yielding
are the signs of that which lives.
The warrior who is inflexible
condemns himself to death,
and the tree is easily broken,
which ever refuses to yield.
Thus the hard and brittle will surely fall,
and the soft and supple will overcome.**

77. THE WAY OF THE TAO

**The Tao is as supple as a bow;
the high made lower, and the lowly raised.
It shortens the string which has been stretched,
and lengthens that which has become too short.**

**It is the way of the Tao to take from those
who have a surplus to what they need,
providing for those without enough.
The way of the ordinary person,**

is not the way of the Tao,
for such people take from those who are poor
and give to those who are rich.

The sage knows that his possessions are none,
therefore he gives to the world;
without recognition, doing his work.
In this way he accomplishes
that which is required of him;
without dwelling upon it in any way,
he gives of his wisdom without display.

78. SINCERITY

There is nothing more yielding than water,
yet when acting on the solid and strong,
its gentleness and fluidity
have no equal in any thing.

The weak can overcome the strong,
and the supple overcome the hard.
Although this is known far and wide,
few put it into practice in their lives.

Although seemingly paradoxical,
the person who takes upon himself,
the people's humiliation,
is fit to rule;
and he is fit to lead,
who takes the country's disasters upon himself.

79. FULFILLING ONE'S OBLIGATIONS

When covenants and bonds are drawn
between the people of the land,
that they might know their obligations,
it is commonplace for many
to fail to meet their dues.

The sage ensures his dues are met,
'though not expecting others to do the same;
in this way he is virtuous.

He is without virtue of his own,
who asks of others that they fulfil

his obligations on his behalf.

The way of nature does not impose
on matters such as these
but stays with the good for ever,
and acts as their reward.

80. STANDING ALONE

A small country may have many machines,
but the people will have no use for them;
they will have boats and carriages
which they do not use;
their armour and weapons
are not displayed,
for they are serious when regarding death.
They do not travel far from home,
and make knots in ropes,
rather than do much writing.

The food they eat is plain and good,
and their clothes are simple;
their homes are secure,
without the need of bolts and bars,
and they are happy in their ways.

'Though the cockerels and dogs
of their neighbours
can be heard not far away,
the people of the villages
grow old and die in peace.

81. MANIFESTING SIMPLICITY

The truth is not always beautiful,
nor beautiful words the truth.

Those who have virtue,
have no need of argument for its own sake,
for they know that argument is of no avail.

Those who have knowledge of the natural way
do not train themselves in cunning,
whilst those who use cunning to rule their lives,
and the lives of others,

**are not knowledgeable of the Tao,
nor of natural happiness.**

**The sage seeks not to have a store
of things or knowledge, for he knows,
the less of these he has, the more he has,
and that the more he gives,
the greater his abundance.**

**The way of the sage is pointed
but does not harm.**

**The way of the sage
is to work without cunning.**
