

I.W. Heysinger 1903

I.

Embodying the Tao

The way that can be overtrod is not the Eternal Way,
The name that can be named is not the Everlasting Name
Which Nameless brought forth Heaven and Earth, which Named, its name we may,
The Mother of all the myriad things of time and space became.
Thereby we sound eternally the mystery divine,
But only without desire to sound, for if desire abide
The portals of the issuing host our baffled sight confine,
And deep within the eternal veil the mystery shall hide.
These two, the Nameless and the Named, they differ but in name,
For in their vast progression from the deep they are the same,
The deep of deeps, from whose eternal gate all spirit came.

II.

Nourishing the Person

When beauty is known as beautiful, lo! ugliness is there,
When good is known as good, then bad and good together go,
Being and Non-existence, linked like brothers forward press,
And difficult and easy, both in mutual currents flow.
The long and short are side by side, each by the other shown,
The high inclines to meet the low, the low to meet the high,
The after follows the before, in mutual consequence,
And tone and voice unite and blend in mutual harmony.
And so the sage, in his affairs, does not on doing dwell,
Proceeds in silence like the myriad things which come to be,
Which growing, claim' no ownership, producing, no reward,
And claiming naught, assuming naught, continue ceaselessly.

III.

Resting the People

Rewarding not the talented from fierce contention frees,
With wealth unprized, the people will not take to thievish arts,
Not seeing what awakes desire will keep the mind at ease,
And so the sage's governing unloads the people's hearts.
He fills the stomach, strengthens bones, and calms the daring will,
He causes people not to know desires they should not hold,
And those who know of such he keeps, from reckless daring, still,
He acts the nothing acting, and there's nothing uncontrolled.

IV.

Without Source

The Tao appears as emptiness, with unreplenished hands,
And in its vast profundity 'tis like the sire of all,
It smoothes the angles in our path, unravels twisted strands,

Softens the glaring light, and fills the clouds of dust that fall.
How pure and still the Tao is! as if it would endure
Forever and forever, oh! whose offspring can it be?
I do not know whose son it is, its birth is so obscure
It seems it might have been before God, in eternity!

V.

Using Emptiness

The ways which heaven and earth pursue are not benevolent,
They treat the myriad things as sacrificial dogs of grass,
And so the sages, comprehending nature's argument,
Regard the hundred families, too, as grass-dogs when they pass.
Heaven and earth a bellows are, which emptied from its strain
Collapses not, but moved again produces more and more,
But men who talk and talk exhaust themselves, and talk in vain,
And all unlikely are to keep the middle path secure.

VI.

Completing Forms

The "Spirit of the Valley" never dies,
The woman spirit of the great abyss,
From its everlasting gate the roots of heaven and earth arise,
Who seeks to use its power it unceasingly supplies,
Effortless, exhaustless, and in peace.

VII.

Sheathing Brightness

Heaven is enduring and the earth continues on,
Because it is not for themselves they live,
So the sage who keeps behind, the foremost place will find,
Who puts himself aside, for himself will best provide,
And unselfishly is able to achieve.

VIII.

Harmony with Nature

The highest goodness that we know has water for its type,
It benefits all things, yet ever flows
To the spot which men disdain, the gutter and the plain,
And so is near the Tao, its archetype.
A residence is excellent according to its place,
A heart for eddies passion never knows,
Generosity for kindness, words for faithfulness,
A government for order, business for its gain,
And movements for their timeliness and grace.
As the man of excellence does not quarrel for his place,

There are none to find fault with him for the places which remain.

IX.

To Go About at Ease

Is it better to hold fast to filling, and fill when fullness is gained?
You may handle the point that is sharpened till all the sharpness is gone,
You may fill your halls with gold and gems, but thieving is not restrained,
And wealth and place, when linked with pride, will only bring ruin on;
When the work is done, and reputation advancing, then, I say,
Is the time to withdraw and disappear, and that is Heaven's Way.

X.

Ability to Do

One can keep the camp whole of the animal soul, by embracing the One alone,
Can bring tenderness by guarding the breath, and be as an infant child,
One can wash and be clean, and, knowing the deep, can be spotless and undefiled,
And, loving the people can rule the land with a rule that is scarcely shown.
Can one not open and close his heavenly gates like a bird on her nest?
When his intellect broadens on every side may its light not remain unknown?
Quickening, feeding, producing, must he still claim the fruit as his own?
To uplift all, and yet rule not, is virtue the deepest and best.

XI.

Use of the Immaterial

Thirty spokes unite in a nave, but the nothingness in the hub
Gives to the wheel its usefulness, for thereupon it goes round;
The potter kneads the clay as he works, with many a twist and rub,
But in the nothingness within, the vessel's use is found;
Doors and windows cut in the walls thereby a room will make,
But in its nothingness is found the room's utility;
So the profit of existences is only for the sake
Of non-existences, where all the use is found to be.

XII.

Repressing Desires

The flash of commingled colors will blind the eyes,
The jangle of musical sounds will deafen the ear,
By the jumbling of tastes change in the mouth will arise,
And with all of each five, sight, hearing and taste disappear.
The maddening rush of the race, the wild hunting waste,
And treasures hard to obtain, but hinder the mind;
So the sage only acts for his own inner self, and the taste
Far unsatisfied seeing and longing is left behind.

XIII.

Rejecting Shame

Like fear are favor and disgrace,
On others they depend for place,
But honor and great sacrifice
To one's own body we can trace.

Like favor and disgrace is fear,
Why should they thus akin appear?
Favor makes one stoop and cringe,
And, when obtained, 'tis held in fear

And losing it, remains disgrace,
And fear again presents its face,
And that is why, with fear 'tis said
Disgrace and favor have their place.

But honor and great sacrifice,
Why do these two appear in guise
Of body? Just because the self
Of my own body these comprise.

They make me have a body, then,
To know my honor, feel my pain,
And when I count it nothingness
What sacrifice can I sustain?

When one, for honor's self alone,
Imperial rule would make his own,
He can thereby be safely used
To rule the realm and hold the throne.

When one, for love, himself will share,
And all self-sacrifice will bear,
The rule of all beneath the sky
Can be entrusted to his care.

XIV.

Making Clear the Mystery

What we cannot see by looking is the evenness of things,
What we cannot hear by listening the rare,
What we cannot seize by grasping is the subtleness that springs
When we try to scrutinize them and compare.
Blended into Unity, above it is not bright,
Below it is not buried in obscurity,
Ceaseless in its action, nameless in its flight,
It returns again to formless immaturity;
The form of formlessness, the shape of the unseen,
Abstruse and indeterminate as shadows on a screen
We meet it front to front and we do not see its face,
We follow it and do not see its back,
But who holds its ancient way
Is the master of to-day,
And its far-away beginning in the olden time can trace,

'Tis the thread of Tao that lies along its track.

XV.

Manifesting Virtue

The skillful masters of the olden time,
With penetration subtle and profound,
Pursued the mysteries of the abyss
To depths which modern knowledge cannot sound;
And as their labors were beyond our ken
I will try to picture something of these men.
Cautious they were, like one who comes to ford a wintry stream,
Irresolute, like one who enters some strange neighborhood,
Reserved, as one, a guest of some quite unknown host, would seem,
Changing, like the melting ice before a summer's flood,
Simple and unpretending as unseasoned blocks of wood,
Vacant, like a valley, and like turbid water dim.
But who can make the turbid water clear?
Leave it to rest, the mud will disappear;
But Who can make the turbid water rest?
Leave it to move, and rest will soon be here.
They who preserve the method of the Tao
Wish not to fill themselves with their own self,
And, empty of themselves, when growing old,
Are never laid, old-fashioned, on the shelf.

XVI.

Returning to the Root

Bring to its full effectiveness the state of vacancy,
Guard with unwearied watchfulness the stillness of the breast,
All things alike go through their stages of activity,
And then return again to their primordial state of rest.
Luxuriant vegetation blooms around on every hand,
But to its root returns again, where'er it may extend,
As though its growth had traveled forth at some supreme command,
And, returning home to stillness, had thus fulfilled its end.
These returnings of command are eternal in their course,
To know of the eternal is called enlightenment,
To know not the eternal of confusion is the source,
And so awakens wickedness, and evil discontent.
To know brings comprehension and a great capacity,
A breadth of comprehension brings a kingliness of way,
The king-like grows to heaven-like, like Tao it comes to be,
Everlasting, though the body perish and decay.

XVII.

Plain Teachings

In the highest antiquity people scarce knew
That rulers existed among them;
In the next age attachment and praise for them grew,
In the next people feared they might wrong them;

And then in the next age the people despised
The rulers whom fate set above them,
For when faith by the rulers no longer is prized,
The people no longer can love them.
Those earliest rulers! what caution they had
In weighing the words they were using;
How successful their deeds! while the people all said
“We are what we are by our choosing.”

XVIII.

A Vulgar Overgrowth

When the Great Tao had ceased to be observed,
Benevolence and Righteousness found place,
And when world-wisdom linked with shrewdness came,
Then Grand Hypocrisy exposed her face.
And now we have, with families all at strife,
Filial piety, parental care,
With states and clans disordered and confused,
Loyalty, and faithfulness are there.

XIX.

Returning to Purity

If men would lay aside their holiness
And wisdom, they would gain a hundred-fold,
And, if benevolence and righteousness,
Parental care and filial love would hold;
If they would drop their cleverness and gain,
Robbers would cease to trouble, as of old.

Here are three things where decorating fails,
Let them again embrace reality,
Let them restore the purity of old,
Let them return to their simplicity,
Curb selfishness, diminish their desires,
And in the genuine find felicity.

XX.

Differing from the Vulgar

Cease learning many things, we shall have peace;
Between the flattering “yea” and honest “yes”
The difference is small, but the effect
World-wide, when good or evil we reject;
The evil that men fear not, no one fears,
And wastefulness without restraint appears.

The multitude of men look satisfied,
They feed at feasts, they mount on towers of pride,
And I alone seem timorous and still,
No signs of promise act upon my will,
A babe not yet matured, sad and forlorn,
Without a home, to desolation born.

The multitude of men have goods to spare,
'Tis only I who wander everywhere
Bereft of all, with dull and stupid gaze,
Myself a chaos and my mind a maze.

The multitude of common men are bright,
And critical and keen, and full of light,
While I alone confused appear to be,
Drifting about on some dark, lonely sea;
The multitude on doing things are bent,
While I alone appear incompetent,
A rustic rude, I differ from all others,
But oh! the food I prize and seek is Our Eternal Mother's.

XXI.

The Empty Center

The grandest aspects of producing force
Find Tao their energizing way and source;
In Tao things move unseen, impalpable,
Yet in it form and semblance brood and dwell;
Impalpable, invisible, yet things
Float forth within on transcendental wings;
Dark and profound, yet lo! within it there,
Are the pure essences which aeons bear;
It holds the truth, it keeps its ancient name,
And watches all that from the beginning came;
From the Beginning! How know I this is so?
By this, it is the Tao, by this I know!

XXII.

Abundance Through Humility

“Who is deficient shall become complete,
He who is bent and twisted shall be straight,
He who is empty shall be filled again.
He who is worn-out shall new strength obtain,
He who has little then shall be supplied,
He who has many things shall be denied.”

Therefore the sage holds fast in his embrace
The Unity, and its example shows,
From self-display is free, and therefore shines,
From self-assertion, so distinguished grows,
From self-praise free, his merit is confessed,
From self-exalting, so will standing gain,
And since he strives not, none with him can strive;
Therefore the ancient sayings are not vain,
They shall come home, and all complete remain.

XXIII.

Emptiness: Nothingness

Be sparing of your speech, and so be self-contained,
A violent wind will not outlast the morning,
A pouring rain is gone before the day is done,
And who is it that sends these notes of warning?
'Tis heaven and earth; if these, even, cannot so endure,
Much less can man, the way of heaven scorning.

So who pursues affairs with the Tao, with the Tao
Identifies himself in all his doing,
And who pursues affairs with its virtue, with its virtue
Identifies himself in his pursuing,
And who pursues affairs with its loss, with its loss
Identifies himself, to his undoing.

Who identifies himself with the Tao, the Tao's one,
Enjoys the happiness of its attaining,
Who identifies himself with its virtue, virtue's one,
Has enjoyment of the virtue he is gaining.
Who identifies himself with its loss, its loss's one,
Enjoys the loss of it he is sustaining.
"Faith not sufficient will, indeed,
Faith not receive in time of need."

XXIV.

Hindering Grace

A man who stands on tiptoe can't be still,
A man with legs astride walks not with skill,
He who is self-displaying is not bright,
He who is self-asserting sheds no light,
He that boasts himself no merit gains,
He who is self-conceited there remains.
Conditions such as these with Tao compared
Are like left-over food too long prepared,
Excrescences men loathe, like wart or spot,
And those who follow Tao dwell with them not.

XXV.

Imaging the Mystery

There was a Thing, all-holding, all-complete,
Which WAS before existed Heaven and Earth,
Changeless! Formless! Solitary! Calm!
All-pervading! Unlimited! the birth
Of all the mighty universe concealed
Within the Motherhood not yet revealed.

I do not know its name; the Way; the Course;
The Tao, I call it; if constrained to make
A name, I call it furthermore The Great!

And Great, it passes onward and away,
'Tis afar, and from afar returning flows,
The ebb of that great tide which sourceless rose.

Now then the Tao is great, and Heaven is great,
And Earth is great, and greatness is of Kings;
Within the world the greatnesses are four,
And one is he who rules o'er men and things;
Man takes his law from Earth; from Heaven this:
Heaven from the Tao; the Tao from what it is.

XXVI.

Virtue of Gravity

Weight is the root of lightness, stillness the master of motion,
And the daily way of the sage departs not from his base,
Although he have brilliant prospects, he is unconcerned and quiet,
Should the lord of ten thousand chariots be too light for his place?
Then he will lose not supporters alone,
But, being too restless, loses his throne.

XXVII.

Employing Skill

The skillful traveler leaves no trace behind him,
The skillful speaker says nothing that falsely jars,
The skillful counter keeps no checks to remind him,
The skillful locker requires no bolts or bars,
And the skillful binder no cords, or knots or strings,
Yet to afterwards open or loose are impossible things.

So the sage in his goodness is ever a saver of men,
No man he rejects or loses,
And alike in his goodness a saver of things, for then
He everything saves and uses,
And this is the inner enlightenment again,
Which comprehends and chooses.

So the good instructs the bad, the bad in turn
Is material for the good; and not to prize
One's own instructor, not to love, but spurn
One's own material, would confuse the wise.
This mutual help and love make all men kin,
And mark the spirit-uk divine, within.

XXVIII.

Returning to Simplicity

He who knows the masculine, and yet retains the feminine,
Will be the whole world's channel, being so,
Eternal virtue will with him remain forevermore,
And infant innocence to him go.

He who knows the spotless white, yet keeps the darkness of the night,
Will be the whole world's model, and the sage
Will hold eternal virtue in his hands forevermore,
And go home again to greet the golden age.

He who knows how glory shines, yet degradation ne'er declines,
Will be the whole world's valley, him alone
Will the spirit of eternal virtue fill forevermore,
And simplicity will claim him as her own.

This unwrought simplicity, when scattered comes to be
The universal vessels, and the sage
May use them as the rulers of the realm forevermore,
And every hurt and injury assuage.

XXIX.

Nothing Through Acting

If one start out to take the world in hand,
And make it, he will never gain his end,
For spirit-vessels are not made like pails,
And he who makes mars, who grasps fails.
For, in the course of things, if some one press
Ahead, some other lags behind, and will,
While one has warmth, another one is chill,
While one is strong, another weakly shrinks,
One keeps himself afloat, another sinks.
Therefore the sage abandons all excess,
And all extravagance and selfishness.

XXX.

Sparing of Wars

He who in harmony with the Tao would aid a ruler of men
Will not with warlike armaments strengthen the realm again,
But his manner of work, if requital came, would bring good payment then.
Wherever a martial host is camped, there thorns and briars grow,
And the track of mighty armies years of ruined harvests show;
The good commander is resolute to strike the decisive blow,
Then stops, for he does not dare complete and take by mastery;
Vain and boastful and arrogant the leader must not be,
But resolute, not violent, and from necessity.
When things have reached their highest pitch they became decrepit and old,
But this is not in accord with the Tao which Heaven and Earth enfold,
And what is not in accord, will pass away like a tale that is told.

XXXI.

Ceasing from War

Warlike arms, however fine, are not the tools of joy,
But of hateful omen to humanity,
Which those who have the Tao will not employ with willingness,
Nor linger where they ever chance to be.

Superior men, at home, deem the honorable place
To be the left hand, but in time of strife
The men who go to war esteem the right to be the best,
For with it they handle sword, and spear, and knife.

They are tools of evil omen, not for the superior man,
Who will only keep and use them when he must,
For peace and quietude are what he prizes most,
And victory is only good when just.

To delight in victory is to delight in scenes of blood,
Where myriads to sudden death are hurled,
And the man who thus enjoys is never fit for power or place,
And will fail to hold possession in the world.

In prosperous affairs the left is honored most,
But in matters of adversity the right,
So the second in command of the army takes the left,
And the opposite the one of greater might.

So the order is, I say, just as at a funeral,
And justly so, for who has thousands slain,
Should weep for those who fell with the bitterness of grief,
As he passes with his melancholy train.

XXXII.

Intuitive Virtue

The eternal Tao is nameless; though it be
Too insignificant a name to have,
In its primordial simplicity
The whole world dare not make of it a slave.

If prince or king could keep it, everything
Would homage pay to him spontaneously,
And Heaven and Earth, combined, sweet dews would bring,
And people know no rule but harmony.

But when it takes control, it has a name,
And, knowing when to stop, men rest at ease,
For to the Tao the whole world is the same
As river streams compared with mighty seas.

XXXIII.

Discriminating the Virtues

He who knows others is wise,
But he who knows himself is wiser still;
He who conquers others is strong,
But to conquer self needs greater strength and skill;
He who is satisfied is rich,
He who is firm in action has a will;
He who loses not his place lives long,
But the man who dies and does not perish, he lives longer still

XXXIV.

True Perfection

Great Tao is all-pervading,
At once on left and right
It may be found, and all things wait
On it for life and light.

No one is refused the gift,
And when the work is done
It does not take the name of it,
Nor claim the merit won.

All things it loves and nurses,
But does not strive to own,
Has no desires, and can be named
With the tiniest ever known.

All things return home to it,
But it does not strive to own,
And can be named with the mightiest,
For it is the Tao alone.

And thus the sage is able
To accomplish his great deeds,
To the end he claims no greatness,
And his great work thus succeeds.

XXXV.

The Kernel of Virtue

Lay hold of the Great Form of Tao!
And the world will follow your train,
It will follow along, and suffer no wrong,
And in peace and content remain.

For music and dainties offered at your gate
The passing guest will tarry awhile and wait.

Though Tao in passing is tasteless,
With nothing to fill the eye,
And with nothing to hear worth filling the ear,
You can use it exhaustlessly.

XXXVI.

Hidden Enlightenment

What is about to contract itself is sure to lengthen itself,
What is about to weaken itself is sure to strengthen itself,
What is about to ruin itself assuredly first uplifts,
And what is about to despoil itself it first endows with gifts.

To hidden enlightenment it is that truths like these belong,
The tender and weak o'ercome and conquer the rigid and the strong,
As fishes perish miserably, escaping from the deep,
The sharp tools of the State, from sight of the people keep!

XXXVII.

To Induce Good Government

The Tao eternally non-acts, and so
It does nothing and yet there is nothing left to do;
If prince or king could keep it, all would change
Of their own accord with a transformation strange.

And so transformed, should desire to change again still come to be,
I would quiet such desire by the Nameless One's simplicity,
But the Nameless One's simplicity is free from all desire,
So tranquilly, of their own accord, all things would still transpire.

XXXVIII.

A Discourse on the Virtues

The highest virtue is un-virtue, therefore it has virtue,
Inferior virtue virtue loses not, and so has none,
The highest virtue is non-action, and thereby does nothing,
Inferior virtue acts it, and exists by acting done.
The highest benevolence acts it, but thereby does nothing,
The highest righteousness acts it, and acting has thereby,
The highest propriety acts it, and then, when none respond,
It stretches forth its arm, and enforces its reply.

So, when the Tao is lost to sight, its attributes are shown,
When these are lost to sight, we find Benevolence appear,
When Benevolence is lost to sight, then Righteousness comes on,
And when Self-righteousness is lost, Propriety is here.
Now, these propriety-things are shams of loyalty and faith,
Forerunners of disorder, which soon will come to be,
Quick-wittedness is but the flimsy flower of the Tao,
And is the first beginning of man's incapacity.
With the solid dwells the solid man, not with the empty shell,
With the mature fruit he abides, but with the flower not he,
The latter he avoids, that the former his may be.

XXXIX.

The Root of Law

Of old these ones attained to unity:
Heaven attained it, thereby it is pure,
Earth attained it, thereby it is steady,

Spirits attained it, thereby they have soul,
Valleys attained it, thereby they are Idled,
The myriad things attained it, thereby live,
Princes and kings, and thereby they became
The standard of the world, by upright rule,
And what produced all this is Unity.

Heaven, but for some source of pureness nothing could maintain,
But for some source of steadiness Earth would be rent in twain,
Spirits, but for some source of spirit power, soon would fail,
And if the vales had not some source, then drouth would soon prevail.
Without some source of life all living creatures soon would die,
Princes and kings, by self-esteem alone, would helpless lie,
—And here one sees that noble things are rooted in the base,
That loftiness, but for the lowly, soon would lose its place;
So prince and king describe themselves as orphans, lonely men,
As carriages which have no wheels on which to run again,
—Is not this an acknowledgment that they are rooted in
The fabric of inferior things, and with the lowly kin?
Enumerate the different parts which go to make a cart,
Take it to pieces, and not one will play a useful part,
Hence men do not desire, like gems, to dwell in single state,
Nor be let drop, like pebble-stones, in masses congregate.

XL.

The Concealed Use

The movement of the Tao is a returning,
And weakness marks its course, to our discerning,
But heaven and earth and everything from its existence came,
And existence, from the non-existent spurning.

XLI.

Sameness and Difference

Scholars of the highest type, who hear about the Tao,
Practise it with diligence unceasing;
Scholars of the middle sort, when they have heard of it,
May keep it, or may find its hold releasing;
But scholars of the lowest class, who hear about the Tao,
Laugh with laughter constantly increasing;
Were they not to laugh at it,—the lowest class of men—
Its fitness as the Tao would soon be ceasing.
And so the sentence-makers have spoken of it so,
“The Tao when at its brightest, only darkness seems to show,
The most advanced who follow it, appear to backward go.
The even path they travel is a rugged sort of trail,
The highest virtue that they find is like a sunken vale,
The purity they boast about, disgraceful is and stale.
The broadest virtue is a thing they somehow seem to lose,
The firmest virtue that they hold is like a poor refuse,

And changeable and fickle is the rectitude they use.
Their greatest square is grown so great no corners can it show,
Their vessels are so huge they never have the time to grow,
Their voices are so very loud they cannot make a sound,
And the forms that they produce so vast that shape is never found.”

‘Tis true the Tao is hidden; that it is nameless here;
But for giving and imparting, and for making all things clear,
And for making them complete, it is the Tao without a peer.

XLII.

Transformations of the Tao

The Tao produced One; One produced Two;
Two produced Three; Three produced All.
All the myriad things bear the yin with darkened pall,
They embrace the yang which lights the coming view,
And between the yin that was, and the yang that is to be,
The immaterial breath makes harmony.

Things that men dislike are to be orphans, lonely men,
Unworthy, incomplete, and yet these very things
Are taken for their titles by princes and by kings;
So it is sometimes that losing gains again,
And sometimes that gaining loses in its turn.
I am teaching what, by others taught, I learn;
The violent and aggressive a good death do not die,
And the father of this teaching—it is I.

XLIII.

All-pervading Use

The softest thing, (like water), in the world, will gallop o’er,
And overcome the hardest, as we know,
And what has non-existence will enter everywhere
Though there be no crevices through which to go.
By this I know the benefit of non-assertiveness,
The profit when from acting we refrain,
Silent teaching! passive doing! alas, there are but few
Under heaven this advantage to obtain!

XLIV.

Established Cautions

Which is nearer you,
Your name or yourself?
Which is more to you,
Your person or your pelf?
And is your loss or gain
The more malicious elf?
Extreme love’s price
Must be paid with sacrifice.

Hoarding to excess
Brings ruin its its place,
Who knows he has enough
Never knows disgrace,

Who knows when to stop
Danger will efface,
And long can endure,
Evermore secure.

XLV.

A Flood of Virtues

Who can behold his great work incomplete
Will keep his usefulness without decay,
He who regards his fullness as a void
In usefulness can exercise each day.

His greatest straightness seems like crookedness,
His greatest skill seems like stupidity,
His greatest eloquence of voice and tongue
The stammering seems of imbecility.

By constant motion cold is overcome,
But heat by being still is conquered best,
In purity and clearness is the type
Of all beneath the sky made manifest.

XLVI.

Sparing of Desires

With the world in step with Tao horses work upon the farms,
When the Tao is disregarded they respond to war's alarms,
And are bred in border waste and wilderness;
There is no greater sin than to sanction fell desire,
Than a discontented life no calamity more dire,
None greater than the grasping to possess;
And he who knows contentment has the all-sufficient cure,
And satisfied, will evermore endure.

XL VII.

Surveying the Far-off

Without going beyond his doorway
One may know all beneath the sky,
Without peeping out from his window
See the Tao of Heaven go by;
And the farther he goes from home he finds
That knowledge becomes less nigh.

So the sages did not travel
To acquire a knowledge of things,
They named them aright without wasting
Their life in vain journeyings;
And, striving not, accomplished ends
By the power which quietude brings.

XLVIII.

Neglecting Knowledge

Striving for learning one gains a daily addition,
Using the Tao there follows a daily remission,
And as the work lessens and lessens there comes a condition

Of nothing doing, when nothing is left to do.
He who would take as his own all the realm under heaven,
Accomplishes it when no trouble is taken or given,
If trouble he use, by trouble itself he is driven,
And unfitted thereby to take what he seeks to pursue.

XLIX.

True Virtue

The sage's heart is not unchangeable,
He makes his own the people's heart and will,
To those who are good I, too, will be good,
To those who are not-good I will be good still,
Virtue is ever good;
Those who are faithful I will meet with faith,
The unfaithful also shall have my good will,
Virtue is our faithhood.
The sage dwells in the world, with thoughtfulness,
But his heart flows in sympathy with all,
The people turn their eyes and ears to him,
And are to him his children, great or small.

L.

Your Life

The going forth is life: the coming home is death:
The followers of life, in every ten,
Are three!
In every ten, death's followers, again,
Are three!
In every ten the people who from life
Are moving to the place where death is rife,
Are three!
What reason' can there be?
They live their lives in life's intensity.

But there is one, as I have heard it said,
So good in managing his living trust,
That he may travel far and never dread
Rhinoceros or tiger fang or thrust,
Or warlike host with garb and weapons red;
There is no spot in which to thrust the horn,
No place the tiger finds to fix his claws,
The soldier's weapon from its aim doth turn,
Now, why is this? Because
In him death finds no place of mortal flaws.

LI.

The Nourishing Teh

All living things are from the Tao,
And nourished by the Teh's advance,
Take shape as things in each combine,
And grow by force and circumstance;
Hence all things honor Tao that grow,
And all exalt its vast outflow.

This exaltation of the Tao,
This honor where it operates,

Is not obedience to command
From that which fashions or creates,
But comes from all, whate'er they be,
A tribute cast spontaneously.

The Tao produces everything,
The Teh, it nurses, raises, feeds,
Completes, matures, prolongs, and spreads
O'er all protection for their needs;
Hence all things honor Tao that grow,
And all exalt its vast outflow.

Producing life for all, it holds
No ownership; it makes all things,
But needs them not; it carries through
Their birth and growth; to life it brings
Long lasting, yet takes no control,
This mystic virtue of the whole.

LII.

Returning Home to the First Cause

When all under heaven had beginning, thereby
The Mother of the World came to be,
When one knows the mother, he will next know the child.
Who keeps to the mother, and remains unbeguiled,
Though his body die, from danger will be free.

Who keeps close his mouth and the gates of the sense,
When his body ends, from trouble will be free,
Who keeps his mouth open, and meddles with affair.,
When his body ends, has no immunity.

To see what is small, this is called enlightenment,
To keep what is tender, this is strength,
Make use of the Light, returning home to its source,
You will lose not your body in calamity's course,
And will train with the Eternal at length.

LIII.

Abundant Evidence

If, in some unexpected manner, I
As one endowed with knowledge should appear,
To walk according to the mighty Tao,
'Tis only bold display that I should fear;
For plain and simple ways Great Tao suggest,
But people love cross-paths and by-ways best.

The halls and courts are splendid, but the fields
Uncultivated are, the granaries
Empty; to put on ornamented robes,
And keen-edged swords, to gorge with gluttonies,
To pile up wealth; this, robbers' pride I call,

But, of a surety, not Great Tao at all.

LIV.

Cultivating Broad Views

The good planter never uproots,
The good keeper holds to his prize,
And sons and grandsons shall bring their fruits
In a ceaseless sacrifice.

Who practises Tao in his life,
His virtues will ever be sound,
Who practises it with his children and wife,
His virtues will greatly abound.

Who practises it in his town,
His virtues will last and extend,
And if in the state or the realm, then down
His virtues will flow without end.

Test others by oneself alone,
Test families by one family,
And in one town, and state, and realm will be shown
The test of what others will be.

How know I that this single source
Throughout the whole world will act so?
By this, that it is, in its ceaseless course,
Forever the self-same flow.

LV.

The Mysterious Talisman

Who has abundantly the attributes
(Of Tao) an infant child is like,
Poisonous insects will not sting, wild beasts
Not seize, and birds of prey not strike.

His bones are tender and the sinews weak,
Yet firmly grasp, the sexual
Unconscious sleeps, and yet it still is there,
A perfect spirit physical,
With throat unharmed he cries the whole day long,
Each perfect part is linked with all.

To know this harmony is called eternal;
To know the eternal, this is called
Brightness supernal.

Increase of life is blessedness, they say,
They call the heart-directed spirit strength,
But these things reach their fullest growth, at length,
And plunge to swift decay;
We call all this contrary to the Tao,
Whatever is contrary to the Tao

Soon will pass away.

LVI.

Profound Virtue

They who know speak not,
And they who speak know not;
To close the mouth and shut the gates,
To blunt the point which lacerates,
To simplify what complicates;
To temper brightness in its glare,
The shadows of the dust to share,
The Deep's identity declare.

A man like that cannot be got
And loved, and then discarded be,
Cannot be got by profit's bribe,
Cannot be got for injury,
Cannot be got by 'honor's gift,
Nor got for cheap humility,
And so becomes, throughout the world,
The type of high nobility.

LVII.

Plain Lessons

Let the upright rule the state,
And the craftful the army lead,
But the realm can only be made one's own
When from active scheming freed.

How do I know this is so?
By facts that are open to all,
As you multiply prohibitive laws
The people to poverty fall.

You increase disorder as well,
When you increase the weapons of war,
And the more and more artful and cunning men grow,
The more and more crafty contrivance they show,
And the more laws and more thieves there are.

Said the sage, I do nothing, and men
Of themselves transformed will be,
I love to keep still, they have uprightness,
I do no scheming, and wealth they possess,
I have no ambition, and plain-mindedness
Will come spontaneously.

LVIII.

Accord with Changes

With a government of liberality
The people all enjoy prosperity,
When government has keen and prying eyes,
Then poverty and misery arise.

For happiness, alas! but only hides

The place behind where misery abides,
And misery ever leans on happiness;
Who knows its end? or is it limitless?

When uprightness in turn appears as strange,
Then goodness, too, to strangeness soon will change,
Confusion of mankind! its day of wrong!
Assuredly it has continued long.

Therefore, the sage is square, hut injures none,
Is angular, but hurt has never done,
Is strict, yet no restriction undertakes,
And dazzles not while he illuminates.

LIX.

Holding Fast to the Tao

In governing men or dealing with Heaven there is nothing like moderation,
And moderation is what is called an early habituation,
Which, when acquired, heaps virtues up in vast accumulation.
And then, with virtues thus heaped up in vast accumulation,
To the overcoming of everything there is no limitation,
And when one knows no limits, he may even have the nation.

Possessing the Mother of the State, he is thereby long-enduring,
As we say of a tree, its roots are deep, and its staunch stem reassuring,
In clearest sight to keep the Tao is lasting life securing.

LX.

Occupying the Throne

Rule a great state in the way one would fry little fish,
Without gutting or scraping, consider the good of the whole,
Let the empire be ruled in accord with the rule of the Tao
And the spirits of those who are gone will not seek to control.

Not only not seek, but spirits will harm not the people,
Not only not harm, but, because of the rule of the sage,
Who harms not, these twain, not seeking to injure each other,
Will therefore in virtue together unite and engage.

LXI.

Virtue of Yielding

A great state is like a great river,
Downflowing with movement and life,
Of all under heaven the union,
Of all under heaven the wife.

Consider the female, the woman
Overcomes by her quietude wholly,
Some make themselves lowly to conquer,
Some conquer because they are lowly.

And so a great state condescending

Will win smaller states to unite,
And small states, themselves by abasement
Will conquer far more than by fight.

If the great state desire but to nourish,
And the small to preserve and extend,
Then each has secured what it sought for,
But to do this the great one must bend.

LXII.

Attending to the Tao

Tao is the hidden refuge of all things,
To the good man his richest treasure brings,
And to the bad in guardianship it clings.
Its beautiful words buy honor by their use,
Its noble deeds lift people from abuse,
And even the bad, are they from it cut loose?
So when the emperor, chosen to his throne,
Appoints three great ones, by high titles known,
If one of these should come to him, alone,
Holding the jade-screen, with four homes fleet,
He would be less than one on lowly seat
Who could the lessons of the Tao repeat.
Why did the ancients prize this Tao so much?
Was it not because it answered every touch,
And that the sin-bound, even, escaped thereby?
So it is most prized of all beneath the sky.

LXIII.

Think in the Beginning

Act the non-acting, let dealing go on without dealings,
In the tasteless find taste, let the great in the little be known,
Find in the few that therein are embodied the many,
And recompense hatred with deeds of goodness alone.

Consider what may become difficult, while it is easy,
Manage the great, by taking it while it is small,
From the easy arise all the difficult things under heaven,
And affairs that are great their source in the little recall.

So the sage, not acting the great, the great will accomplish,
Who promises lightly lacks truth, and they who believe
Many things to be easy will find many hard, while the sage
With the difficult, even, finds nothing too hard to achieve.

LXIV.

Guarding the Small

That which is at rest is easy to be kept hold of,
And what has made no sign, and is yet concealed from all,
Is easy to be taken care of then by proper measures,

Break it while it is feeble, scatter it while it is small.

Act before it exists, regulate before disorder,
The mighty tree that fills the arms has grown from a tiny sprout,
From a little mound of earth was raised the tower of nine stories,
And the journey of a thousand miles began with the first step out.

He that makes mars, he that grasps loses;
The sage will neither make, nor mar, nor grasp, and cannot lose,
But people fail in business, on the verge of its succeeding,
By losing at the end the care they first began to use.

And so the sage does not desire the things desired by others,
He does not prize the treasures that are difficult to obtain,
He learns what others do not learn, he turns back to their leavings,
And helps spontaneous nature, but dares not to constrain.

LXV.

Pure Virtue

In centuries of old the men who used the light
Of the Tao to its goodness were not blinded,
They used to practise it not to make the people bright,
But, better still, to make them simple-minded.

In the governing of men the very hardest thing
To encounter is their sapience redundant,
To govern by this sapience a robber rule will bring,
And, to rule without it, blessing most abundant.

Who knows of these two things has the key of government,
There is benefit profound in their rehearsal,
Far-reaching in extent, from all else different,
It will swiftly bring agreement universal.

LXVI.

To Put Oneself Behind

Rivers and seas!
Homage and tribute from all the valley streams
Pour into these;
They lower themselves, and for this reason alone
Become royalties.

So the wise man,
If ever he wish to be above other men,
In his words will plan
To remain below, and if he desire to lead,
Will keep from the van.

And in this way
Though he dwell above, men will not feel his weight,
He leads the array,
But they feel that he is not an impediment,
Nor in their way.

And so his compeers

Unwearyingly exalt and honor him
With joy and cheers,
And since he does not strive, no strife with him
Ever appears.

LXVII.

Three Precious Things

All the world agrees
That while my Tao is great,
Myself unseemly seems to be,
Like one of low estate.
But because of his unseemliness
Now only is he great,
For long has mediocrity
Had seemliness for mate.

Three precious things I hold,
And guard with diligence,
Compassionateness, economy,
And avoiding precedence.
With the first I can be brave,
With the second generous be,
And, while I shrink from precedence,
Hold honor's high degree.

But if they discard compassion,
And are all for bravery,
Economy, and still are all
For generosity,
If they give up the rearmost place,
And in front they strive to be,
'Tis death! For compassionateness will give
In battle victory,
And Heaven for sure defense will spread
Compassion's canopy.

LX VIII.

Fellowship with Heaven

The great commander is not a warlike man,
The hardest fighter is not a man of wrath,
The greatest conqueror shares not in the strife,
The great employer treads the workmen's path.
This is the virtue known as "striving not,"
The wondrous power of utilizing men,
And this is called the fellowship with Heaven,
The fellowship the ancients followed then.

LXIX.

Profound Use

An experienced soldier said, "I dare not be
The host in war, I'd rather be the guest;
I dare not, at the first, advance an inch,
But rather would retire a foot if pressed."
It is to march when there's nowhere to march,
To threat with arms when there are arms nowhere,
To charge without an enemy in sight,
To take by sword and spear when none are there.
Misfortune never greater can there be
Than to make light of enemies in war,
Thereby we lose our all, for then when meet
Embattled hosts, the weak is conqueror.

LXX.

Difficult to Know

My words are most easily known,
Most easy' to practise, too,
But none in the world my words can know,
And their practice can pursue.

There's an Ancestry in my words,
There's a Head for the things I preach,
But, because they are all misunderstood,
They know not what I teach.

The ones who know me are few,
But the few who know me prize,
Though the sage may wear a hair-cloth garb,
The gem in his bosom lies.

LXXI.

Knowledge and Its Sickness

To know the not-known, this is something high,
And not to know the known is sick to be,
To be sick of sickness sickness will dispel,
To be sick of ignorance will make us well,
Thereby, the sage from ignorance is free.

LXXII.**Loving Oneself**

When people to the dreadful give no heed,
On them will come what is their greatest dread;
Then narrow not the dwelling place they need,
Do not depreciate the life they lead,
For from dislike of things dislike is bred.

Therefore the one who knows himself, the sage,
Of what he is himself makes no display,
He loves himself, indeed, from youth to age,
But self-esteem does not his mind engage,
He chooses that and this he puts away.

LXXIII.**Trusting In Action**

Whose courage makes him dare is slain,
He lives whom courage makes refrain,
And harm or profit each will gain;
But Heaven's hate, what could compel
That it on this or that one fell,
'Tis even hard for sage to tell.

Not to strive is Heaven's way,
And yet it conquers; naught to say,
Yet answers; will uncalled obey;
Its perfect plans in slowness hide,
The net of Heaven has meshes wide,
But through its meshes none can glide.

LXXIV.**To Control Delusion**

When people fear not death, then why
Affright them with its fear?
If kept in awe of it could I
Seize one for some wild deed to die,
And slay him? Who would dare?

To slay the slayer stands always
The executioner,
Now, if some one his work essays,
And seeks to slay the one who slays,
That man is sure to err.

Great carpenter, we call him, who
To slay the slayer stands,
And hewing is his work to do,
Who takes the hewer's place, to hew,
Is sure to cut his hands.

LXXV.**Injury from Covetousness**

The taxes eaten by the ruling class

Left nothing to be eaten by the mass,
And that is why through famine they must pass.

The ruling class made such a great ado
In ruling men, that these made trouble, too,
And that is why their difficulties grew.

People make light of death in their turmoil,
And, seeking life's excess, thereby beguile
Themselves till death, made light of, claims his spoil.

On life to set less store is therefore best,
It thus becomes a far more worthy quest
Than when 'tis made one's ruling interest.

LXX VI.

Caution Against Strength

Man in his life is tender and weak,
He dies, and is rigid and strong,
Trees and grass in their life are supple and weak,
They die, and are stiff as a prong;
What accompany life are the tender and weak,
And death are the stiff and the strong.
The conqueror fails who relies on his strength,
The tree in its strength the woodman will chop,
The strong and the great will stay under, at length,,
And the tender and weak on the top.

LXXVII.

The Way of Heaven

May not the Way of Heaven be compared
To the bending of a bow,
Bringing down the part which formerly was high,
And raising up the low?
It takes from men their superabundant things,
Which to the poorer go.

But while it is the Way of Heaven to curb
All superfluity,
And supplement, for those who lacking are,
Their own deficiency,
Men's way is different quite, they rob the poor,
That richer they may be.

Who are the men who, with great store of wealth,
Their fellow-men can bless
By serving them? 'Tis only who, themselves,
The Tao of Heaven possess.

Therefore the sage will act, but never claim
Himself the benefits,
Accomplish deeds of merit, then retire
Unseen from where he sits;
And does he ever seek to make display
Of worth he ne'er admits?

LXXVIII.

True Faith

There is nothing weaker than water,
Or easier to efface,
But for attacking the hard and the strong
Nothing can take its place.

That the tender conquers the rigid,
That the weak overcomes the strong,
The whole world knows, but in practice who
Can carry the work along?

“Who bears the sins of his country,”
We know from the sage’s word,
“Shall be called the master of sacrifice,
And hailed as its altar’s lord.”

“Who carries his country’s woes,
The curse of the land who bears,
Shall be called the king of the world”; ‘tis true,
Though a paradox it appears.

LXXIX.

To Sustain Agreements

When parties long in animosity
Are reconciled, a grudge there still will be,
Some hatred yet remains from that old grudge,
And what will best suffice to make it budge?

The sage will then of his agreement hold
His own part, leaving others uncontrolled,
Who virtue has, the whole agreement names,
While he who has not, only cites his claims.

The Tao of Heaven no favoritism knows,
But for the good will ever interpose.

LXXX.

Standing Alone

Suppose I had a country small,
With people few, and I had there
Some officers of ten,
Or of a hundred men,
I’d not employ those men at all;
Though death were feared, unfrightened then,
My people would not emigrate elsewhere.

They might have carriages and boats,
But not in them to ride away,
They might have warlike arms,
But never war’s alarms
Would call them with their hateful notes;
They’d even forget how writing charms,
And knotted cords again they would display.

Then would they relish homely food,
Their plain clothes would seem elegant,
Though dwellings might be poor,
Content would guard the door,
And simple habits, plain and good, Far better than they knew before,
A sense of fresh enjoyment would implant.

A neighboring state might be in sight,
The voice of fowls and dogs be heard,
But life like that would make
My people such joy take
In their own state, that till the night
Of age should their enjoyment slake,
Of age should their enjoyment slake,
And they should die, they'd not exchange a word.

LXXXI.

Making Clear the Substance

Sincere words are not fine,
Fine words are not sincere,
[The Faithful friend will stick to the end,
But the flatterer tickles the ear.]

The skillful do not debate,
Debaters lack in skill,
[For truth is found by looking around,
And words are weapons of ill.]

The knowing are not most learned,
The most learned do not know,
[For knowledge is grown from thought alone,
While learning from others must grow.]

The sage lays up no treasure,
No hoard of goods or gold,
[For they who keep a store-house deep,
A constant watch must hold.]

The more he works for others
The more he works for his own,
[For it grows by use, is lost by abuse,
And he gathers by what he has sown.]

The more he gives away,
The more does he have himself,
[For thought's a thing that from thought will spring,
Which is quite the reverse of pelf.]

The Way of Heaven is sharp,
But it never will cut nor wound,
[For they who swim with the flowing stream
Will ever be safe and sound.]

'Tis the way of the sage to act,
He acts but never strives,
[For striving breaks whatever it makes,

And only a wreck survives.]