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

Compiled by B. Boisen

GNOMAD Publishing
Boston, Massachusetts
1996
Brief Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

Newton Centre, Massachusetts
May 19, 1996

Sources
(Wu)--ONE
Tao can be talked about, but not
the Eternal Tao.
Names can be named, but not the
Eternal Name.
As the origin of heaven-and-
earth, it is nameless;
As "the Mother" of all things, it
is nameable.
So, as ever hidden, we should
look at its inner essence;
As always manifest, we should
look at its outer aspects.
These two flow from the same
source, though differently named;
And both are called mysteries.
The Mystery of mysteries is the
Door of all essence.

(Lau)
The way that can be spoken of
Is not the constant way;
The name that can be named
Is not the constant name.
The nameless was the beginning
of heaven and earth;
The named was the mother of the
myriad creatures.
Hence always rid yourself of
desires in order to observe its
secrets;
But always allow yourself to
have desires in order to observe its
manifestations.
These two are the same but
diverge in name as they issue
forth.
Being the same they are called
mysteries,
Mystery upon mystery--
The gateway of the manifold
secrets.

(Chan)
The Tao that can be told is not
the eternal Tao;
The name that can be named is
not the eternal name.
The Nameless is the origin of
Heaven and Earth;
The Named is the mother of all
things.
Therefore let there always be
non-being so we may see their
subtlety,
And let there always be being so
we may see their outcome.
The two are the same, but after
they are produced, they have
different names.
They both may be called deep
and profound.
Deeper and more profound,
The door of all subtleties!

(Henricks)
As for the Way, the Way that
can be spoken of is not the
constant Way;
As for names, the name that can
be spoken of is not the constant
name.
The nameless is the beginning of
the ten thousand things;
The named is the mother of the
ten thousand things.
Therefore, those constantly
without desires, by this means will
perceive its subtlety.
Those constantly with desires, by
this means will see only that which
they yearn for and seek.
These two together emerge;
They have different name yet
they're called the same;
That which is even more
profound than the profound--
The gateway of all subtlety.
(Waley)
The Way that can be told is not an Unvarying Way;
The names that can be named are not unvarying names.
It was from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang:
The named is but the mother that bears the ten thousand creatures, each after its kind.
Truly, 'Only he that rids himself forever of desire can see the Secret Essences';
He that has never rid himself of desire can see only the Outcomes.
These two things issued from the same mould, but nevertheless are different in name.
This 'same mould' we can call the Mystery,
Or rather the 'Darker than any Mystery',
The Doorway whence issued all Secret Essences.

(Lin)
The Tao that can be told of is not the Absolute Tao;
The Names that can be given are not the Absolute Names.
The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
The named is the Mother of All things.
Therefore:
Oftentimes, one strips oneself of passion in order to see the Secret of Life;
Oftentimes, one regards life with passion in order to see its manifest results.
These two (the Secret and its manifestations) are (in their nature) the same;
They are given different names when they become manifest.
They may both be called the Cosmic Mystery:
Reaching from the Mystery into the Deeper Mystery
Is the Gate to the Secret of All Life.

(Cleary)
A way can be a guide, but not a fixed path;
names can be given, but not permanent labels.
Nonbeing is called the beginning of heaven and earth;
Being is called the mother of all things.
Always passionless, thereby observe the subtle; ever intent, thereby observe the apparent.
These two come from the same source but differ in name; both are considered mysteries.
The mystery of mysteries is the gateway of marvels.

(Peng&English)
The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.
The named is the mother of ten thousand things.
Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.
Ever desiring, one sees the manifestations.
These two spring from the same source but differ in name; this appears as darkness.
Darkness within darkness.
The gateway to all mystery.
When all the world recognizes beauty as beauty, this in itself is ugliness.
When all the world recognizes good as good, this in itself is evil.
Indeed, the hidden and the manifest give birth to each other.
Difficult and easy complement each other.
Long and short exhibit each other.
High and low set measure to each other.
Voice and sound harmonize each other.
Back and front follow each other.
Therefore, the Sage manages affairs without ado,
And spreads his teaching without talking.
He denies nothing to the teeming things.
He rears them, but lays no claim to them.
He does his work, but sets no store by it.
He accomplishes his task, but does not dwell upon it.
And yet it is just because he does not dwell on it
That nobody can ever take it away from him.

The whole world recognizes the beautiful as the beautiful, yet this is only the ugly; the whole world recognizes the good as the good, yet this is only the bad.
Thus Something and Nothing produce each other;
The difficult and the easy complement each other;
The long and the short off-set each other;
The high and the low incline towards each other;
Note and sound harmonize with each other.
Therefore the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action and practices the teaching that uses no words.
The myriad creatures rise from it yet it claims no authority;
It gives them life yet claims no possession;
It benefits them yet exacts no gratitude;
It accomplishes its task yet lays claim to no merit.
It is because it lays claim to no merit
That its merit never deserts it.

When the people of the world all know beauty as beauty, there arises the recognition of ugliness.
When they all know the good as good, there arises the recognition of evil.
Therefore:
Being and non-being produce each other;
Difficult and easy complete each other;
Long and short contrast each other;
High and low distinguish each other;
Sound and voice harmonize each other;
Front and back follow each other.
Therefore the Sage manages affairs without action and spreads doctrine without words.
All things arise, and he does not turn away from them.
He produces them, but does not take possession of them.
He acts, but does not rely on his own ability.
He accomplishes his task but does not claim credit for it.
It is precisely because he does not claim credit that his accomplishment remains with him.
(Waley)
It is because everything under Heaven recognizes beauty as beauty that the idea of ugliness exists.
And equally if every one recognizes virtue as virtue, this would merely create fresh conceptions of wickedness.
For truly ‘Being and Not-being’ grow out of one another;
‘Difficult and easy’ complete one another.
Long and short test one another;
‘High and low’ determine one another.
Pitch and mode give harmony to one another.
Front and back give sequence to one another.
Therefore the Sage relies on actionless activity,
Carries on wordless teaching.
But the myriad creatures are worked upon by him; he does not disown them.
He rears them, but does not lay claim to them,
Controls them, but does not lean upon them.
Achieves his aims, but does not call attention to what he does;
And for the very reason that he does not call attention to what he does
He is not ejected from fruition of what he has done.

(Lin)
When the people of the Earth all know beauty as beauty, there arises (the recognition of) ugliness.
When the people of the Earth all know the good as good, there arises (the recognition of) evil.
Therefore:
Being and non-being interdepend in growth;
Difficult and easy interdepend in completion;
Long and short interdepend in contrast;
High and low interdepend in position;
Tones and voices interdepend in harmony;
Front and behind interdepend in company.
Therefore the Sage:
Manages the affairs without action;
Preaches the doctrine without words;
All things take their rise, but he does not turn away from them;
He gives them life, but does not take possession of them.
He acts, but does not appropriate;
Accomplishes but claims no credit.
It is because he lays claim to no credit
That the credit cannot be taken away from him.

(Cleary)
When everyone knows beauty is beauty, this is bad.
When everyone knows good is good, this is not good.
So being and nonbeing produce each other:
difficulty and ease complement each other;
long and short shape each other;
high and low contrast with each other;
voice and echoes conform to each other.
before and after go along with each other.
So sages manage effortless service and carry out unspoken guidance.
All beings work, without exception:
if they live without possessiveness,
act without presumption, and do not dwell on success,
then this very nondwelling success will not leave.

(Feng&English)
Under heaven all can see beauty as beauty only because there is ugliness.
All can know good as good only because there is evil.
Therefore having and not having arise together.
Difficult and easy complement each other.
Long and short contrast each other;
High and low rest upon each other;
Voice and sound harmonize each other.
Front and back follow one another.
Therefore the sage goes about doing nothing, teaching no-talking.
The ten thousand things rise and fall without cease.
Creating, yet not possessing.
Working yet not taking credit.
Work is done, then forgotten.
Therefore it lasts forever.
(Wu)--THREE
By not exalting the talented you will cause the people to cease from rivalry and contention.
By not prizing goods hard to get, you will cause the people to cease from robbing and stealing.
By not displaying what is desirable, you will cause the people's hearts to remain undisturbed.
Therefore the Sage's way of governing begins by:
Emptying the heart of desires,
Filling the belly with food,
Weakening the ambitions.
Toughening the bones.
In this way he will cause the people to remain without knowledge and without desire, and prevent the knowing ones from any ado.
Practice Non-ado, and everything will be in order.

(Lau)
Not to honor men of worth will keep the people from contention;
not to value goods which are hard to come by will keep them from theft;
not to display what is desirable will keep them from being unsettled of mind.
Therefore in governing the people,
the sage empties their minds but fills their bellies,
weakens their wills but strengthens their bones.
He always keeps them innocent of knowledge and free from desire, and ensures that the clever never dare to act.
Do that which consists in taking no action, and order will prevail.

(Chan)
Do not exalt the worthy, so that the people shall not compete.
Do not value rare treasures, so that the people shall not steal.
Do not display objects of desire, so that the people's hearts shall not be disturbed.
Therefore in the government of the sage,
He keeps their hearts vacuous,
Fills their bellies,
Weakens their ambitions,
And strengthens their bones.
He always causes his people to be without knowledge (cunning) or desire,
And the crafty to be afraid to act.
By acting without action, all things will be in order.

(Henricks)
By not elevating the worthy, you bring it about that people will not compete.
By not valuing goods that are hard to obtain, you bring it about that people will not act like thieves.
By not displaying the desirable you bring it about that people will not be confused.
Therefore, in the government of the Sage:
He empties their minds,
And fills their bellies.
Weakens their ambition,
And strengthens their bones.
He constantly causes the people to be without knowledge and without desires.
If he can bring it about that those with knowledge simply do not dare to act,
Then there is nothing that will not be in order.
(Waley)
If we stop looking for 'persons of
superior morality' to put in power,
there will be no more jealousies
among the people.
If we cease to set store by
products that are hard to get, there
will be no more thieves. If the
people never see such things as
excite desire, their hearts will
remain placid and undisturbed.
Therefore the Sage rules
By emptying their hearts
And filling their bellies,
Weakening their intelligence
And toughening their sinews
Ever striving to make the people
knowledgeless and desireless.
Indeed he sees to it that if there
be any who have knowledge, they
dare not interfere.
Yet through his actionless
activity all things are duly
regulated.

(Lin)
Exalt not the wise, so that the
people shall not scheme and
contend:
Prize not rare objects, so that the
people shall not steal;
Shut out from sight the things of
desire,
So that the people's hearts shall
not be disturbed.
Therefore in the government of
the Sage:
He keeps empty their hearts
Makes full their bellies,
Discourages their ambitions,
Strengthens their frames;
So that the people may be
purified of their thoughts and
desires.
And the cunning ones shall not
presume to interfere.
By action without deeds
May all live in peace.

(Cleary)
Not exalting cleverness causes
the people not to contend.
Not putting high prices on hard-
to-get goods causes the people not
to steal.
Not seeing anything to want
cause the mind not to be confused.
Therefore the government of the
sages
empties the mind and fills the
middle,
weakened ambition and
strengthens the bones,
always keeping the people
innocent and passionless.
It makes the sophisticated not
dare to contrive;
action being without contrivance,
nothing is disordered.

(Feng&English)
Not exalting the gifted prevents
quarreling.
Not collecting treasures prevents
stealing.
Not seeing desirable things
prevents confusion of the heart.
The wise therefore rule by
emptying hearts and stuffing
bellies,
by weakening ambitions and
strengthening bones.
If men lack knowledge and
desire, then clever people will not
try to interfere.
If nothing is done, then all will be
well.
(Wu)--FOUR
The Tao is like an empty bowl.
Which in being used can never be filled up.
Fathomless, it seems to be the origin of all things.
It blunts all sharp edges.
It unites all tangles.
It harmonizes all lights.
It unites the world into one whole.
Hidden in the deeps.
Yet it seems to exist forever.
I do not know whose child it is;
It seems to be the common ancestor of all, the father of things.

(Lau)
The Way is empty, yet use will not drain it.
Deep, it is like the ancestor of the myriad creatures.
Blunt the sharpness;
Untangle the knots;
Soften the glare;
Let your wheels move only along old ruts.
Dankly visible, it only seems as if it were there.
I know not whose son it is.
It images the forefather of God.

(Chan)
Tao is empty (like a bowl),
It may be used but its capacity is never exhausted.
It is bottomless, perhaps the ancestor of all things.
It blunts its sharpness.
It unites its tangles.
It softens its light.
It becomes one with the dusty world.
Deep and still, it appears to exist forever.
I do not know whose son it is.
It seems to have existed before the Lord.

(Henricks)
The Way is empty;
Yet when you use it, you never need fill it again.
Like an abyss! It seems to be the ancestor of the ten thousand things.
It fills down sharp edges;
Unties the tangles;
Softens the glare;
And settles the dust.
Submerged! It seems perhaps to exist.
We don't know whose child it is;
It seems to have even preceded the Lord.
(Waley)
The Way is like an empty vessel
That yet may be drawn from
Without ever needing to be filled.
It is bottomless; the very
progenitor of all things in the
world.
In it all sharpness is blunted,
All tangles untied,
All glare tempered,
All dust smoothed.
It is like a deep pool that never
dries.
Was it too the child of something
else? We cannot tell.
But as a substanceless image it
existed before the Ancestor.

(Lin)
Tao is all-pervading, and its use
is inexhaustible!
Fathomless!
Like a fountain head of all
things.
Its sharp edges rounded off.
Its tangles untied.
Its light tempered.
Its turmoil submerged.
Yet crystal clear like still water it
seems to remain.
I do not know whose Son it is,
An image of what existed before
God.

(Cleary)
The Way is unimpeded harmony;
its potential may never be fully
exploited.
It is as deep as the source of all
things:
it blunts the edges,
resolves the complications,
harmonizes the light,
asimilates to the world.
Profoundly still; it seems to be
there:
I do not know whose child it is,
before the creation of images.

(Feng&English)
The Tao is an empty vessel; it is
used, but never filled.
Oh, unfathomable source of ten
thousand things!
Blunt the sharpness.
Untangle the knot.
Soften the glare.
Merge with dust.
Oh, hidden deep but ever present!
I do not know from whence it
comes.
It is the forefather of the gods.
(Wu)--FIVE
Heaven-and-Earth is not sentimental;
It treats all things as straw-dogs.
The Sage is not sentimental;
He treats all his people as straw-dogs.
Between Heaven and Earth.
There seems to be a Bellows;
It is empty, and yet it is inexhaustible;
The more it works, the more comes out of it.
No amount of words can fathom it:
Better look for it within you.

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

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

(Henricks)
Heaven and Earth are not humane;
They regard the ten thousand things as straw dogs.
The Sage is not humane;
He regards the common people as straw dogs.
The space between Heaven and Earth--is it not like a bellows?
It is empty and yet not depleted;
Move it and more always comes out.
Much learning means frequent exhaustion.
That's not so good as holding to the mean.
(Waley)
Heaven and Earth are ruthless:
To them the Ten Thousand
Things are but as straw dogs.
The Sage too is ruthless;
To him the people are but as
straw dogs.
Yet Heaven and Earth and all
that lies between is like a bellows
In that it is empty, but gives a
supply that never fails.
Work it, and more comes out.
Whereas the force of words is
soon spent.
Far better to keep what is in the
heart.

(Lin)
Nature is unkind:
It treats the creation like
sacrificial straw-dogs.
The Sage is unkind:
He treats the people like
sacrificial straw-dogs.
How the universe is like a
bellows!
Empty, yet it gives a supply that
never fails;
The more it is worked, the more
it brings forth.
By many words is wit exhausted.
Rather, therefore, hold to the
core.

(Cleary)
Heaven and earth are not
humane;
They regard all beings as straw
dogs.
Sages are not humane;
they see all people as straw dogs.
The space between heaven and
earth is like bellows and pipes.
empty yet inexhaustible,
producing more with movement.
The talkative reach their wits' end again and again;
that is not as good as keeping
centered.

(Feng&English)
Heaven and earth are impartial:
They see the ten thousand things
as straw dogs.
The wise are impartial;
They see the people as straw
dogs.
The space between heaven and
earth is like a bellows.
The shape changes but not the
form;
The more it moves, the more it
yields.
More words count less.
Hold fast to the center.
(Wu) -- S.I.X
The Spirit of the Fountain dies not.
It is called the Mysterious Feminine.
The doorway of the Mysterious Feminine
is called the Root of Heaven and Earth.
Lingerin like gossamer, it has only a hint of existence;
And yet when you draw upon it, it is inexhaustible.

(Lau)
The spirit of the valley never dies.
This is called the mysterious female.
The gateway of the mysterious female
Is called the root of heaven and earth.
Dimly visible, it seems as if it were there,
Yet use will never drain it.

(Chan)
The spirit of the valley never dies.
It is called the subtle and profound female.
The gate of the subtle and profound female
Is the root of Heaven and Earth.
It is continuous, and seems to be always existing.
Use it and you will never wear it out.

(Henricks)
The valley spirit never dies;
We call it the mysterious female.
The gates of the mysterious female--
These we call the roots of Heaven and Earth.
Subtle yet everlasting! It seems to exist.
In being used, it is not exhausted.
(Waley)
The Valley Spirit never dies.
It is named the Mysterious Female.
And the Doorway to the Mysterious Female
Is the base from which Heaven and Earth sprung.
It is there within us all the while;
Draw upon it as you will, it never runs dry.

(Lin)
The Spirit of the Valley never dies.
It is the Mystic Female.
The Door of the Mystic Female
Is the root of Heaven and Earth.
Continuously, continuously,
It seems to remain.
Draw upon it
And it serves you with ease.

(Cleary)
The valley Spirit not dying
is called the mysterious female.
The opening of the mysterious female
is called the root of heaven and earth.
Continuous, on the brink of existence,
to put it into practice, don't try to force it.

(Feng&English)
The valley spirit never dies:
It is the woman, primal mother.
Her gateway is the root of heaven and earth.
It is like a veil barely seen.
Use it; it will never fail.
(Wu) - SEVEN
Heaven lasts long, and Earth abides.
What is the secret of their durability?
Is it not because they do not live for themselves
That they can live so long?
Therefore, the Sage wants to remain behind.
But finds himself at the head of others;
Recks himself out;
But finds himself safe and secure.
Is it not because he is selfless
That his Self is realized?

(Lau)
Heaven and earth are enduring.
The reason why heaven and earth can be enduring
is that they do not give themselves life.
Hence they are able to be long-lived.
Therefore the sage puts his person last and it comes first,
Treats it as extraneous to himself and it is preserved.
Is it not because he is without thought of self
that he is able to accomplish his private ends?

(Chan)
Heaven is eternal and Earth everlasting.
They can be eternal and everlasting
because they do not exist for themselves.
And for this reason can exist forever.
Therefore the sage places himself in the background, but finds himself in the foreground.
He puts himself away, and yet he always remains.
Is it not because he has no personal interests?
This is the reason why his personal interests are fulfilled.

(Henricks)
Heaven endures; Earth lasts a long time.
The reason why Heaven and Earth can endure and last a long time--
Is that they do not live for themselves.
Therefore they can endure.
Therefore the Sage;
Puts himself in the background yet finds himself in the foreground;
Puts self-concern out of his mind, yet finds that his self-concern is preserved.
Is it not because he has no self-interest,
That he is therefore able to realize his self-interest?
(Waley)
Heaven is eternal, the Earth everlasting.
How come they to be so? It is because they do not foster their own lives;
That is why they live so long.
Therefore the Sage
puts himself in the background;
but is always to the fore.
Remains outside; but is always there.
Is it because he does not strive for any personal end
That all his personal ends are fulfilled?

(Lin)
The universe is everlasting.
The reason the universe is everlasting
Is that it does not live for Self.
Therefore it can long endure.
Therefore the Sage puts himself last.
And finds himself in the foremost place;
Regards his body as accidental,
And his body is thereby preserved.
Is it not because he does not live for Self
That his Self achieves perfection?

(Cleary)
Heaven is eternal, earth is everlasting.
The reason they can be eternal and everlasting
is that they do not foster themselves;
that is why they can live forever.
For this reason sages put themselves last.
and they were first;
they excluded themselves, and they survived.
Was it not by their very selflessness
that they managed to fulfill themselves?

(Feng&English)
Heaven and Earth last forever.
Why do heaven and earth last forever?
They are unborn.
So ever living.
The sage stays behind, thus he is ahead.
He is detached, thus at one with all.
Through selfless action, he attains fulfillment.
Wu-EIGHT

The highest form of goodness is like water.
Water knows how to benefit all things without striving with them. It stays in places loathed by all men.
Therefore, it comes near the Tao. In choosing your dwelling, know how to keep to the ground.
In cultivating your mind, know how to dive in the hidden deeps.
In dealing with others, know how to be gentle and kind.
In speaking, know how to keep your words.
In governing, know how to maintain order.
In transacting business, know how to be efficient.
In making a move, know how to choose the right moment.
If you do not strive with others, you will be free from blame.

(Lau)
Highest good is like water.
Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settle where non would like to be.
It comes close to the way.
In a home it is the site that matters;
In quality of mind it is depth that matters;
In an ally it is benevolence that matters;
In speech it is good faith that matters;
In government it is order that matters;
In affairs it is ability that matters;
In action it is timeliness that matters.
It is because it does not contend that it is never at fault.

(Chan)
The best (man) is like water.
Water is good; it benefits all things and does not compete with them.
It dwells in (lowly) places that all disdain.
That is why it is so near to Tao.
[The best man] in his dwelling loves the earth.
In his heart, he love what is profound.
In his associations, he love humanity.
In his words, he love faithfulness.
In government, he loves order.
In handling affairs, he love competence.
In his activities, he love timeliness.
It is because he does not compete that he is without reproach.

(Henricks)
The highest good is like water.
Water is good at benefiting the ten thousand things and yet it does not compete with them.
It dwells in places the masses of people detest.
Therefore it is close to the Way.
In dwelling, the good thing is the land.
In the mind, the good thing is depth.
In giving, the good thing is being like Heaven.
In speaking, the good thing is sincerity.
In governing the good thing is ability.
In activity, the good thing is timeliness.
It is because it does not compete, that therefore it is without fault.
(Waley)
The highest good is like that of water.
The goodness of water is that it benefits the ten thousand creatures; yet itself does not scramble, but is content with the places that all men disdain.
It is this that makes water so near to the Way.
And if men think the ground the best place for building a house upon,
If among thoughts they value those that are profound,
If in friendship they value gentleness,
In words, truth;
in government, good order;
In deeds, effectiveness;
in actions, timeliness--
In each case it is because they prefer what does not lead to strife,
And therefore does not go amiss.

(Lin)
The best of men is like water; Water benefits all things and does not compete with them. It dwells in (the lowly) places that all disdain.-- Wherein it comes near to the Tao.
In his dwelling, (the Sage) loves the (lowly) earth;
In his heart, he loves what is profound;
In his relations with others, he loves kindness;
In his words, he loves sincerity;
In his government, he loves peace;
In business affairs, he loves ability;
In his actions, he loves choosing the right time.
It is because he does not contend
That he is without reproach.

(Cleary)
Higher good is like water:
the good in water benefits all,
and does so without contention.
It rests where people dislike to be.
so it is close to the Way,
Where it dwells becomes good ground;
profound is the good in its heart, benevolent to good it bestows.
Goodness in words is trustworthiness,
goodness in government is order;
goodness in work is ability,
goodness in action is timeliness.
But only by noncontention is there nothing extreme.

(Feng & English)
The highest good is like water.
Water gives life to the ten thousand things and does not strive.
It flows in places men reject and so is like the Tao.
In dwelling, be close to the land.
In meditation, go deep in the heart.
In dealing with others, be gentle and kind.
In speech, be true.
In ruling, be just.
In daily life, be competent.
In action, be aware of the time and the season.
No fight: No blame.
(Wu)--NINE
As for holding to fulness,
Far better were it to stop in time!
Keep on beating and sharpening
a sword.
And the edge cannot be preserved
for long.
Fill your house with gold and
jade.
And it can no longer be guarded.
Set store by your riches and
honour.
And you will reap a crop of
calamities.
Here is the Way of Heaven:
When you have done your work,
retire!

(Lau)
Rather than fill the brim by
keeping it upright
Better to stop in time;
Hammer it to a point
And the sharpness cannot be
preserved for ever;
There may be gold and jade to
fill a hall
But there is none who can keep
them.
To be overbearing when one has
wealth and position
Is to bring calamity upon oneself.
To retire when the task is
accomplished
Is the way of heaven.

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

(Henricks)
To hold upright and fill it,
Is not so good as stopping in
time.
When you pound it out and give
it a point,
It won’t be preserved very long.
When gold and jade fill your
rooms,
You’ll never be able to protect
them.
Arrogance and pride with wealth
and rank,
On their own bring on disaster.
When the deed is accomplished
you retire;
Such is Heaven’s Way!
(Waley)
Stretch a bow to the very full.
And you will wish that you had stopped in time;
Temper a sword-edge to its very sharpest,
And you will find it soon grows dull.
When bronze and jade fill your hall
It can no longer be guarded.
Wealth and place breed insolence
That brings ruin in its train.
When your work is done, then withdraw!
Such is Heaven’s Way.

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

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

(Feng&English)
Better stop short than fill to the brim.
Oversharpen the blade, and the edge will soon blunt.
Amass a store of gold and jade, and no one can protect it.
Claim wealth and titles, and disaster will follow.
Retire when work is done.
This is the way of Heaven.
(Wu)--Ten
In keeping the spirit and the vital soul together.
Are you able to maintain their perfect harmony?
In gathering your vital energy to attain suppleness.
Have you reached the state of a new-born babe?
In washing and clearing your inner vision.
Have you purified it of all dross?
In loving your people and governing your state.
Are you able to dispense with cleverness?
In the opening and shutting of heaven's gate,
Are you able to play the feminine part?
Enlightened and seeing far into all directions.
Can you at the same time remain detached and non-active?
Rear your people!
Feed your people!
Rear them without claiming them for you own!
Do you work without setting any store by it!
Be a leader, not a butcher!
This is called the hidden Virtue.

(Lau)
When carrying on your head your perplexed bodily soul can you embrace in your arms the One And not let go?
In concentrating your breath can you become as supple As a babe?
Can you polish your mysterious mirror And leave no blemish?
Can you love the people and govern the state Without resorting to action?
When the gates of heaven open and shut Are you capable of keeping to the role of the female?
When your discernment penetrates the four quarters Are you capable of not knowing anything?
It gives them life and rears them. It gives them life yet claims no possession;
It benefits them yet exacts no gratitude;
It is the steward yet exercises no authority.
Such is called the mysterious virtue.

(Ch'ien)
Can you keep the spirit and embrace the One without departing from them?
Can you concentrate your vital force (ch'i) and achieve the highest degree of weakness like an infant?
Can you clean and purify your profound insight so it will be spotless?
Can you love the people and govern the state without knowledge (cunning)?
Can you play the role of the feminine in the opening and closing of the gates of Heaven?
Can you understand all and penetrate all without taking any action?
To produce things and to rear them,
To produce, but not to take possession of them,
To act, but not to rely on one's own ability,
To lead them, but not to master them--
This is called the profound and secret virtue (hsiian-te).

(Henricks)
In nourishing the soul and embracing the One--can you do it without letting them leave?
In concentrating your breath and making it soft--can you make it like that of a child?
In cultivating and cleaning your profound mirror--can you do it so that it has no blemish?
In loving the people and giving life to the state--can you do it without using knowledge?
In opening and closing the gates of Heaven--can you play the part of the female?
In understanding all within the four reaches--can you do it without using knowledge?
Give birth to them and nourish them.
Give birth to them and don't try to own them:
Help them to grow and don't rule them.
This is called Profound Virtue.
(Waley)
Can you keep the unquiet physical-coil from straying, hold fast to the unity, and never quit?
Can you, when concentrating your breath, make it soft like that of a little child?
Can you wipe and cleanse your vision of the Mystery till all is without blur?
Can you love the people and rule the land, yet remain unknown?
Can you in opening and shutting the heavenly gates play always the female part?
Can your mind penetrate every corner of the land, but you yourself never interfere?
Rear them, then, feed them, Rear them, but do not lay claim to them.
Control them, but never lean upon them; Be chief among them, but do not manage them.
This is called the Mysterious Power.

(Lin)
In embracing the One with your soul.
Can you never forsake the Tao?
In controlling your vital force to achieve gentleness.
Can you become like the newborn child?
In cleansing and purifying your Mystic vision.
Can you strive after perfection?
In loving the people and governing the kingdom.
Can you rule without interference?
In opening and shutting the Gates of Heaven.
Can you play the part of the Female?
In comprehending all knowledge, Can you renounce the mind?
To give birth, to nourish.
To give birth without taking possession, To act without appropriation, To be chief among men without managing them--
This is the Mystic Virtue.

(Cleary)
Carrying vitality and consciousness,
embracing them as one, can you keep them from parting?
Concentrating energy, making it supple, can you be like an infant?
Purifying hidden perception, can you make it flawless?
Loving the people, governing the nation,
can you be unconstrained?
As the gate of heaven opens and closes,
can you be impassive?
As understanding reaches everywhere.
can you be innocent?
Producing and developing, producing without possessing, doing without presuming, growing without domineering: this is called mysterious power.

(Feng&English)
Carrying body and soul and embracing the one. Can you avoid separation? Attending fully and becoming supple.
Can you be as a newborn babe? Washing and cleansing the primal vision.
Can you be without stain? Loving all men and ruling the country.
Can you be without cleverness? Opening and closing the gates of heaven.
Can you play the role of a woman? Understanding and being open to all things, Are you able to do nothing? Giving birth and nourishing, Bearing yet not possessing, Working yet not taking credit, Leading yet not dominating, This is the Primal Virtue.
(Wu)--ELEVEN
Thirty spokes converge upon a single hub;
It is on the hole in the center that the use of the cart hinges.
We make a vessel from a lump of clay;
It is the empty space within the vessel that makes it useful.
We make doors and windows for a room;
But it is these empty spaces that make the room livable.
Thus, while the tangible has advantages.
It is the intangible that makes it useful.

(Lau)
Thirty spokes
Share one hub.
Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the cart.
Knead clay in order to make a vessel. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose at hand, and you will have the use of the vessel.
Cut out doors and windows in order to make a room. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the room.
Thus what we gain is something, yet it is by virtue of nothing that this can be put to use.

(Chan)
Thirty spokes are united around the hub to make a wheel.
But it is on its non-being that the utility of the carriage depends.
Clay is molded to form a utensil.
But it is on its non-being that the utility of the utensil depends.
Doors and windows are cut out to make a room.
But it is on its non-being that the utility of the room depends.
Therefore turn being into advantage, and turn non-being into utility.

(Henricks)
Thirty spokes unite in one hub:
It is precisely where there's no substance, that we find the usefulness of the wheel.
We fire clay and make vessels;
It is precisely where there's no substance, that we find the usefulness of clay pots.
We chisel out doors and windows;
It is precisely in these empty spaces, that we find the usefulness of the room.
Therefore, we regard having something as beneficial;
But having nothing is useful.
(Waley)
We put thirty spokes together and call it a wheel;
But it is on the space where there is nothing that the usefulness of the wheel depends.
We turn clay to make a vessel;
But it is on the space where there is nothing that the usefulness of the vessel depends.
We pierce doors and windows to make a house;
And it is on these spaces where there is nothing that the usefulness of the house depends.
Therefore just as we take advantage of what is, we should recognize the usefulness of what is not.

(Lin)
Thirty spokes unite around the nave;
From their not-being (losing of their individuality) arises the utility of the wheel.
Mould clay into a vessel;
From its not-being (in the vessel's hollow) arises the utility of the vessel.
Cut out doors and windows in the house (-wall),
From their not-being (empty-space) arises the utility of the house.
Therefore by the existence of things we profit.
And by the non-existence of things we are served.

(Cleary)
Thirty spokes join at the hub; their use for the cart is where they are not.
When the potter's wheel makes a pot, the use of the pot is precisely where there is nothing.
When you open doors and windows for a room, it is where there is nothing that they are useful to the room.
Therefore being is for benefit, Nonbeing is for usefulness.

(Peng&English)
Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub;
It is the center hole that makes it useful.
Shape clay into a vessel; it is the space within that makes it useful.
Cut doors and windows for a room; it is the holes which make it useful.
Therefore benefit comes from what is there; usefulness from what is not there.
TWELVE
The five colours blind the eye.
The five tones deafen the ear.
The five flavours cloy the palate.
Racing and hunting madden the mind.
Rare goods tempt men to do wrong.
Therefore, the Sage takes care of the belly, not the eye.
He prefers what is within to what is without.

(Lau)
The five colours make man's eyes blind;
The five notes make his ears deaf;
The five tastes injure his palate;
Riding and hunting make his mind go wild with excitement;
Goods hard to come by serve to hinder his progress.
Hence the sage is for the belly, not for the eye.
Therefore he discards the one and takes the other.

(Chan)
The five colors cause one's eyes to be blind.
The five tones cause one's ears to be deaf.
The five flavors cause one's palate to be spoiled.
Racing and hunting cause one's mind to be mad.
Goods that are hard to get injure one's activities.
For this reason the sage is concerned with the belly and not the eyes.
Therefore he rejects the one but accepts the other.

(Henricks)
The five colors cause one's eyes to go blind.
Racing horses and hunting cause one's mind to go mad.
Goods that are hard to obtain pose an obstacle to one's travels.
The five flavors confuse one's palate.
The five tones cause one's ears to go deaf.
Therefore, in the government of the Sage:
He's for the belly and not for the eyes.
Thus he rejects that and takes this.
(Waley)
The five colours confuse the eye.
The give sounds dull the ear.
The five tastes spoil the palate.
Excess of hunting and chasing makes minds go mad.
Products that are hard to get impede their owner's movements.
Therefore the Sage considers the belly not the eye.
' Truly, 'he rejects that but takes this'.

(Lin)
The five colors blind the eyes of man:
The five musical notes deafen the ears of man:
The five flavors dull the taste of man:
Horse-racing, hunting and chasing madden the minds of man;
Rare, valuable goods keep their owners awake at night.
Therefore the Sage provides for the belly and not for the eye.
Hence, he rejects the one and accepts the other.

(Cleary)
Colors blind the people's eyes.
Sounds deafen their ears.
Flavors spoil people's palates.
The chase and the hunt craze people's minds;
Goods hard to obtain make people's actions harmful.
Therefore the sages work for the middle and not the eyes,
leaving the latter and taking the former.

(Feng&English)
The five colors blind the eye.
The five tones deafen the ear.
The five flavors dull the taste.
Racing and hunting madden the mind.
Precious things lead one astray.
Therefore the sage is guided by what he feels and not by what he sees.
He lets go of that and chooses this.
(Wu)--THIRTEEN
“Welcome disgrace as a pleasant surprise.
Prize calamities as your own body.”

Why should we "welcome disgrace as a pleasant surprise"?
Because a lowly state is a boon:
Getting it is a pleasant surprise.
And so is losing it!
That is why we should "welcome disgrace as a pleasant surprise."
Why should we "prize calamity as our own body"?
Because our body is the very source of our calamities.
If we have no body, what calamities can we have?
Hence, only he who is willing to give his body for the sake of the world is fit to be entrusted with the world.
Only he who can do it with love is worthy of being steward of the world.

(Lau)
Favour and disgrace are things that startle;
High rank is, like one's body, a source of great trouble.
What is meant by saying that favour and disgrace are things that startle?
Favour when it is bestowed on a subject serves to startle as much as when it is withdrawn.
That is what is meant by saying that favour and disgrace are things that startle.
What is meant by saying that high rank is, like one's body, a source of great trouble?
The reason I have great trouble is that I have a body.
When I no longer have a body, what trouble have I?
Hence he who values his body more than dominion over the empire can be entrusted with the empire.
He who loves his body more than dominion over the empire can be given custody of the empire.

(Chan)
Be apprehensive when receiving favor or disgrace.
Regard trouble as seriously as you regard your body.
What is meant by being apprehensive when receiving favor or disgrace?
Favor is inferior.
Be apprehensive when you receive them and also be apprehensive when you lose them.
That is what is meant by being apprehensive when receiving favor or disgrace.
What does it mean to regard great trouble as seriously as you regard your body?
The reason why I have great trouble is that I have a body (and am attached to it).
If I have no body, what trouble could come?
Therefore he who values the world as his body may be entrusted with the empire.
He who loves the world as his body may be entrusted with the empire.

(Henricks)
"Regard favor and disgrace with alarm."
"Respect great distress as you do your own person."
What do I mean when I say "Regard favor and disgrace with alarm?"
Favor is inferior.
If you get it--be alarmed!
If you lose it--be alarmed!
This is what is meant when I say "Regard favor and disgrace with alarm."
What do I mean when I say "Respect great distress as you do your own person?"
The reason why I have great distress is that I have a body.
If I had no body, what distress would I have?
Therefore, to one who values acting for himself over acting on behalf of the world, you can entrust the world.
And to one who in being parsimonious regards his person as equal to the world, you can turn over the world.
(Waley)  
'Favour and disgrace goad as it were to madness:  
high rank hurts keenly as our bodies hurt.  
What does it mean to say that favour and disgrace goad as it were to madness?  
It means that when they lose it they turn distraught.  
That is what is meant by saying favour and disgrace goad as it were to madness.  
What does it mean to say that high rank hurts keenly as our bodies hurt?  
The only reason that we suffer hurt is that we have bodies;  
if we had no bodies, how could we suffer?  
Therefore we may accept the saying: 'He who in dealing with the empire regards his high rank as though it were his body is the best person to be entrusted with rule;  
he who in dealing with the empire loves his subjects as one should love one's body is the best person to whom one can commit the empire.'

(Lin)  
"Favor and disgrace cause one dismay:  
What we value and what we fear are as if within our Self."  
What does this mean: "Favor and disgrace cause one dismay?"  
Those who receive a favor from above are dismayed when they receive it, and dismayed when they lose it.  
What does it mean: "What we value and what we fear are as if within our Self?"  
We have fears because we have a self.  
When we do not regard that self as self,  
What have we to fear?  
Therefore he who values the world as his self may then be entrusted with the government of the world;  
And he who loves the world as his self--the world may then be entrusted to his care.

(Cleary)  
"Favor and disgrace seem alarming;  
high status greatly afflicts your person.  
What are favor and disgrace?  
Favor is the lower:  
get it and you're surprised,  
lose it and you're startled.  
This means favor and disgrace are alarming.  
Why does high status greatly afflict your person?  
The reason we have a lot of trouble is that we have selves.  
If we had no selves, what troubles would we have?  
Therefore those who embody nobility to act for the sake of the world seem to be able to draw the world to them,  
while those who embody love to act for the sake of the world seem to be worthy of the trust of the world.

(Feng&English)  
Accept disgrace willingly.  
Accept misfortune as the human condition.  
What do you mean by "Accept disgrace willingly"?  
Accept being unimportant.  
Do not be concerned with loss or gain.  
This is called "accepting disgrace willingly."  
What do you mean by "Accept misfortune as the human condition"?  
Misfortune comes from having a body.  
Without a body, how could there be misfortune?  
Surrender yourself humbly; then you can be entrusted to care for all things.  
Love the world as your own self; then you can truly care for all things.
(Lau)
What cannot be seen is called evanescent;
What cannot be heard is called rarefied;
What cannot be touched is called minute.
These three cannot be fathomed
And so they are confused and looked upon as one.
Its upper part is not dazzling;
Its lower part is not obscure.
Dimly visible, it cannot be named
And returns to that which is without substance.
This called the shape that has no shape,
The image that is without substance.
This is called the indistinct and shadowy.
Go up to it and you will not see its head;
Follow behind it and you will not see its rear.
Hold fast to the way of antiquity
In order to keep in control of the realm today.
The ability to know the beginning of antiquity
Is called the thread running through the way.

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

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

These three, because they cannot be further scrutinized,
  Blend into one.
Its rising brings no light;
  Its sinking, no darkness.
Endless the series of things without name
On the way back to where there is nothing.
  They are called shapeless shapes;
Forms without form;
  Are called vague semblances.
Go towards them, and you can see no front;
  Go after them, and you can see no rear.
Yet by seizing on the Way that was
You can ride the things that are now.
  For to know what once there was, in the Beginning,
  This is called the essence of the Way.

(Lin)
  Looked at, but cannot be seen--
That is called the Invisible (yu).
  Listened to, but cannot be heard--
That is called the Inaudible (hsii).
  Grasped at, but cannot be touched--
That is called the Intangible (we).

These three elude all our inquiries
And hence blend and become One.
  Not by its rising, is there light.
Nor by its sinking, is there darkness.

Unceasing, continuous,
  It cannot be defined;
And reverts back to the realm of nothingness.
  That is why it is called the Form
  of the Formless,
  The Image of the Nothingness.
That is why it is called the Elusive:
  Meet it and you do not see its face;
Follow it and you do not see its back.
He who holds fast to the Tao of old
  In order to manage the affairs of
Now Is able to know the Primeval Beginnings
  Which are the continuity of Tao.

(Cleary)
What you don't see when you look
is called the unobtrusive.
What you don't hear when you listen
is called the rarefied.
What you don't get when you grasp
is called the subtle.

These three cannot be completely fathomed,
so they merge into one;
above is not bright, below is not dark.
Continuous, unnameable, it returns again to nothing.
This is called the stateless state,
the image of no thing;
this is called mental abstraction.
When you face it you do not see its head,
when you follow it you do not see its back.
Hold the ancient Way
so as to direct present existence:
only when you can know the ancient
can this be called the basic cycle of the Way.

(Feng&English)
Look, it cannot be seen--it is beyond form.
Listen, it cannot be heard--it is beyond sound.
Grasp, it cannot be held--it is intangible.
These three are indefinable;
Therefore they are joined as one.
From above it is not bright;
From below it is not dark:
An unbroken thread beyond description.
It returns to nothingness.
The form of the formless.
The image of the imageless.
It is called indefinable and beyond imagination.
Stand before it and there is no beginning.
Follow it and there is no end.
Stay with the ancient Tao.
Move with the present.
Knowing the ancient beginning is the essence of Tao.
(Wu)-FIFTEEN
The ancient adepts of the Tao
were subtle and flexible, profound
and comprehensive.
Their minds were too deep to be
fathomed.
Because they are unfathomable.
One can only describe them
vaguely by their appearance.
Hesitant like one wading a
stream in winter;
Timid like one afraid of his
neighbours on all sides;
Cautious and courteous like a
guest;
Yielding like ice on the point of
melting;
Simple like an uncarved block;
Hollow like a cave;
Confused like a muddy pool;
And yet who else could quietly
and gradually evolve from the
muddy to the clear?
Who else could slowly but
steadily move from the inert to the
living?
He who keeps the Tao does not
want to be full.
But precisely because he is never
full.
He can always remain like a
hidden sprout.
And does not rush to early
ripening.

(Lau)
Of old he who was well versed in
the way
Was minutely subtle,
mysteriously comprehending.
And too profound to be known.
It is because he could not be
known
That he can only be given a
makeshift description:
Tentative, as if fording a river in
winter.
Hesitant, as if in fear of his
neighbours;
Formal like a guest;
Falling apart like thawing ice;
Thick like the uncarved block;
Vacant like a valley;
Murky like muddy water.
Who can be muddy and yet,
settling, slowly become limpid?
Who can be at rest and yet
stirring, slowly come to life?
He who holds fast to this way
Desires not to be full.
It is because he is not full
That he can be worn and yet
newly made.

(Chan)
Of old those who were the best
rulers were subtly mysterious and
profoundly penetrating:
Too deep to comprehend.
And because they cannot be
comprehended,
I can only describe them
arbitrarily:
Cautious, like crossing a frozen
stream in the winter.
Being at a loss, like one fearing
danger on all sides.
Reserved, like one visiting,
Supple and pliant, like ice about
to melt.
Genuine, like a piece of uncarved
wood.
Open and broad, like a valley,
Merged and undifferentiated, like
muddy water.
Who can make muddy water
gradually clear through
tranquility?
Who can make the still gradually
come to life through activity?
He who embraces this Tao does
not want to fill himself to
overflowing.
It is precisely because there is no
overflowing that he is beyond
wearing out and renewal.

(Henricks)
The one who was skilled at
practicing the Way in antiquity,
Was subtle and profound.
mysterious and penetratingly wise.
His depth cannot be known.
It is only because he cannot be
known
That therefore were I forced to
describe him I'd say:
Hesitant we he! Like someone
crossing a river in winter.
Undecided he was! As though in
fear of his neighbors on all for
sides.
Solemn and polite was he! Like a
guest.
Scattered and dispersed was he!
Like ice as it melts.
Genuine, unformed was he! Like
uncarved wood.
Merged, undifferentiated was he!
Like muddy water.
Broad and expansive was he! like
a valley.
If you take muddy water and still
it, it gradually becomes clear.
If you bring something to rest in
order to move it, it gradually
comes alive.
The one who preserves this Way
does not desire to be full;
Therefore he can wear out with
no need to be renewed.
(Waley)
Of old those that were the best
officers of Court
Had inner natures subtle,
abstruse, mysterious, penetrating,
Too deep to be understood.
And because such men could not
be understood
I can but tell of them as they appeared to the world:
Circumspect they seemed, like
one who in winter crosses a stream.
Watchful, as one who must meet
danger on every side.
Ceremonious, as one who pays a visit;
Yet yielding, as ice when it begins to melt.
Blank, as a piece of uncarved wood;
Yet receptive as a hollow in the hills.
Murky as a troubled stream—
Which of you can assume such murkiness, to become in the end
still and clear?
Which of you can make yourself inert, to become in the end full of
life and stir?
Those who possess this Tao do not try to fill themselves to the
brim,
And because they do not try to fill themselves to the brim
They are like a garment that endures all wear and need never be
renewed (?).

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

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

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

Aim to the utmost emptiness.
Cling single-heartedly to interior peace.
While all things are stirring together.
I only contemplate the Return.
For flourishing as they do,
Each of them will return to its root.
To return to the root is to find peace.
To find peace is to fulfill one's destiny.
To fulfill one's destiny is to be constant.
To know the Constant is called Insight.
If one does not know the Constant,
One runs blindly into disasters.
If one knows the Constant,
One can understand and embrace all.
If one understands and embraces all,
One is capable of doing justice.
To be just is to be kingly;
To be kingly is to be heavenly;
To be heavenly is to be one with the Tao;
To be one with the Tao is to abide forever.
Such a one will be safe and whole.
Even after the dissolution of his body.

(Lau)
I do my utmost to attain emptiness;
I hold firmly to stillness.
The myriad creatures all rise together
and I watch their return.
The teeming creatures
All return to their separate roots.
Returning to one's roots is known as stillness.
That is what is meant by returning to one's destiny.
Returning to one's destiny is known as the constant.
Knowledge of the constant is known as discernment.
Woe to him who willfully innovates
While ignorant of the constant.
But should one act from knowledge of the constant
One's action will lead to impartiality,
Impartiality to kinglyness,
Kinglyness to heaven,
Heaven to the way,
The way to perpetuity,
And to the end of one's days one will meet with no danger.

(Chan)
Attain complete vacuity,
Maintain steadfast quietude.
All things come into being,
And I see thereby their return.
All things flourish,
But each one returns to its root.
This return to its root means tranquility.
It is called returning to its destiny.
To return to destiny is called the eternal (Tao).
To know the eternal is called enlightenment.
Not to know the eternal is to act blindly to result in disaster.
He who knows the eternal is all-embracing,
Being all-embracing, he is impartial.
Being impartial, he is kingly (universal).
Being kingly, he is one with Nature.
Being one with Nature, he is in accord with Tao.
Being in accord with Tao, he is everlasting.
And is free from danger throughout his lifetime.

(Henricks)
Take emptiness to the limit;
Maintain tranquility in the center.
The ten thousand things -- side-by-side they arise;
And by this I see their return.
Things come forth in great numbers;
Each one returns to its root.
This is called tranquility.
"Tranquility" -- This means to return to your fate.
To return to your fate is to be constant;
To know the constant is to be wise.
Now to know the constant is to be wise.
Not to know the constant is to be reckless and wild;
If you're reckless and wild, your actions will lead to misfortune.
To know the constant is to be called all embracing;
To be all-embracing is to be impartial;
To be impartial is to be kingly;
To be kingly is to be like Heaven;
To be like Heaven is to be one with the Tao;
If you're one with the Tao, to the end of your days you'll suffer no harm.
(Waley)
Push far enough towards the Void,
Hold fast enough to Quietness.
And of the ten thousand things
none but can be worked on by you.
I have beheld them, whither they go back.
See, all things howsoever they flourish
Return to the root from which they grew.
This return to the root is called Quietness;
Quietness is called submission to Fate;
What has submitted to Fate has become part of the always-so.
To know the always-so is to be illumined;
Not to know it, means to go blindly to disaster.
He who knows the always-so has room in him for everything;
He who has room in him for everything is without prejudice.
To be without prejudice is to be kingly;
To be kingly is to be of heaven;
To be of heaven is to be in Tao.
Tao is forever and he that possesses it,
Though his body ceases, is not destroyed.

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

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

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

The highest type of ruler is one of whose existence the people are barely aware.
Next comes one whom they love and praise.
Next comes one whom they fear.
Next comes one whom they despise and defy.
When you are lacking in faith, others will be unfaithful to you.
The Sage is self-effacing and scanty of words.
When his task is accomplished and things have been completed,
All the people say, "We ourselves have achieved it!"

(Lau)
The best of all rulers is but a shadowy presence to his subjects.
Next comes the ruler they love and praise;
Next comes one they fear;
Next comes one with whom they take liberties.
When there is not enough faith, there is lack of good faith.
Hesitant, he does not utter words lightly.
When his task is accomplished and his work is done
The people all say, "It happened to us naturally."

(Chan)
The best (rulers) are those whose existence is (merely) known by the people.
The next best are those who are loved and praised.
The next best are those who are feared.
And the next are those who are despised.
It is only when one does not have enough faith in others that others will have no faith in him.
(The great rulers) value their words highly.
They accomplish their task; they complete their work.
Nevertheless their people say that they simply follow Nature (Tzu-jan).

(Henricks)
With the highest kind of rulers, those below simply know they exist.
With those one step down -- they love and praise them.
With those one further step down -- they fear them.
And with those at the bottom -- they ridicule and insult them.
When trust is insufficient, there will be no trust in return.
Hesitant, undecided! Like this is his respect for speaking.
He completes his tasks and finishes his affairs.
Yet the common people say, "These things all happened by nature."
(Waley)
Of the highest the people merely
know that such a one exists;
The next they draw near to and
praise;
The next they shrink from,
intimidated: but revile.
Truly, 'it is by not believing
people that you turn them into
liars'.
But from the Sage it is so hard at
any price to get a single word
That when his task is
accomplished, his work done,
Throughout the country every
one says 'It happened of its own
accord'.

(Lin)
Of the best rulers the people
(only) know that they exist;
The next best they love and
praise:
The next they fear;
and the next they revile.
When they do not command the
people's faith,
Some will lose faith in them.
And then they resort to oaths!
But (of the best) when their task
is accomplished, their work done,
The people all remark, "We have
done it ourselves."

(Cleary)
Very great leaders in their
domains are only known to exist.
Those next best are beloved and
praised.
The lesser are feared and
despised.
Therefore when faith is
insufficient and there is disbelief,
it is from the high value placed
on words.
Works are accomplished, tasks
are completed,
and ordinary folk all say they are
acting spontaneously.

(Feng&English)
The very highest is barely
known.
Then comes that which people
know and love.
Then that which is feared.
Then that which is despised.
Who does not trust enough will
not be trusted.
When actions are performed
Without unnecessary speech.
People say, "We did it!"
When the Great Tao was abandoned,
There appeared humanity and justice.
When intelligence and wit arose,
There appeared great hypocrites.
When the six relations lost their harmony,
There appeared filial piety and paternal kindness.
When darkness and disorder began to reign in a kingdom,
There appeared the loyal ministers.

When the great way falls into disuse
There are benevolence and rectitude:
When cleverness emerges
There is great hypocrisy;
When the six relations are at variance
There are filial children;
When the state is benighted
There are loyal ministers.

When the Great Tao declined,
The doctrines of humanity (jen) and righteousness (i) arose.
When knowledge and wisdom appeared.
There emerged great hypocrisy.
When the six family relations are not in harmony,
There will be the advocacy of filial piety and deep love of children.
When a country is in disorder,
There will be praise of loyal ministers.

Therefore when the Great Way is rejected,
it is then that we have the virtues of humanity and righteousness;
When knowledge and wisdom appear.
it is then that there is great hypocrisy;
When the six relations are not in harmony,
it is then that we have filial piety and compassion;
And when the country is in chaos and confusion,
it is then that there are virtuous officials.
(Waley)
It was when the Great Way declined
That human kindness and morality arose;
It was when intelligence and knowledge appeared
That the Great Artifice began.
It was when the six near ones were no longer at peace
That there was talk of 'dutiful sons';
Nor till fatherland was dark with strife
Did we hear of 'loyal slaves'.

(Lin)
On the decline of the great Tao,
The doctrines of "love" and "justice" arose
When knowledge and cleverness appeared,
Great hypocrisy followed in its wake.
When the six relations no longer lived at peace,
There was (praise of) "kind parents" and "filial sons."
When a country fell into chaos and misrule,
There was (praise of) "loyal ministers."

(Cleary)
When the Great Way is deserted
there is humanitarian duty.
When intelligence comes forth,
there is great fabrication.
When relations are discordant,
then there is family love.
When the national polity is
enlightened and confused,
then there are loyal ministers.

(Feng&English)
When the great Tao is forgotten,
Kindness and morality arise.
When wisdom and intelligence are born.
The great pretense begins.
When there is no peace within the family.
Filial piety and devotion arise.
When the country is confused and in chaos.
Loyal ministers appear.
(Wu)—NINETEEN
Drop wisdom, abandon cleverness.
And the people will benefit a hundredfold.
Drop humanity, abandon justice.
And the people will return to their natural affections.
Drop shrewdness, abandon sharpness.
And robbers and thieves will cease to be.
These three are the criss-cross of Tao.
And are not sufficient in themselves.
Therefore, they should be subordinated to a higher principle:
See the Simple and embrace the Primal.
Diminish the self and curb the desires!

(Lau)
Exterminate the sages, discard the wise.
And the people will benefit a hundredfold.
Exterminate benevolence, discard rectitude.
And the people will again be filial.
Exterminate ingenuity, discard profit.
And there will be no more thieves and bandits.
These three, being false adornments, are not enough.
And the people must have something to which they can attach themselves:
Exhibit the unadorned and embrace the uncarved block.
Have little thought of self and as few desires as possible.

(Chan)
Abandon sageliness and discard wisdom;
Then the people will benefit a hundredfold.
Abandon humanity and discard righteousness;
Then the people will return to filial piety and deep love.
Abandon skill and discard profit;
Then there will be no thieves or robbers.
However, these three things are ornament and not adequate.
Therefore let people hold on to these:
Manifest plainness,
Embrace simplicity,
Reduce selfishness,
Have few desires.

(Henricks)
Eliminate sageliness, throw away knowledge.
And the people will benefit a hundredfold.
Eliminate humanity, throw away righteousness.
And the people will return to filial piety and compassion.
Eliminate craftiness, throw away profit.
Then we will have no robbers and thieves.
These three sayings—
Regarded as a text are not yet complete.
Thus, we must see to it that they have the following appended:
Manifest plainness and embrace the genuine;
Lessen self-interest and make the genuine;
Eliminate learning and have no undue concern.
(Waley)
Banish wisdom, discard knowledge.
And the people will be benefited a hundredfold.
Banish human kindness, discard morality.
And the people will be dutiful and compassionate.
Banish skill, discard profit.
And thieves and robbers will disappear.
If when these three things are done they find life too plain and unadorned,
Then let them have accessories;
Give them Simplicity to look at,
the Uncarved Block to hold,
Give them selflessness and fewness of desires.

(Lin)
Banish wisdom, discard knowledge.
And the people shall profit a hundredfold;
Banish "love", discard "justice".
And the people shall recover love of their kin;
Banish cunning, discard "utility".
And thieves and brigands shall disappear.
As these three touch the externals and are inadequate;
The people have need of what they can depend upon:
Reveal thy Simple Self,
Embrace thy Original Nature,
Check thy selfishness,
Curtail thy desires.

(Cleary)
Eliminate sagacity, abandon knowledge.
and the people benefit a hundredfold.
Eliminate humanitarianism, abandon duty,
and the people return to familial love.
Eliminate craft, abandon profit.
and theft will no longer exist.
These three become insufficient when used for embellishment causing there to be attachments.
See the basic, embrace the unspoiled,
lessen selfishness, diminish desire.

(Feng & English)
Give up sainthood, renounce wisdom.
And it will be a hundred times better for everyone.
Give up kindness, renounce morality.
And men will rediscover filial piety and love.
Give up ingenuity, renounce profit.
And bandits and thieves will disappear.
These three are outward forms alone; they are not sufficient in themselves.
It is more important To see the simplicity,
To realize one's true nature.
To cast off selfishness
And temper desire.
(Wu)--TWENTY

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

(Lau)

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

(Chan)

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

(Henricks)

Agreement and angry rejection;
How great is the difference between them?
Beautiful and ugly;
What is it like--the difference between them?
The one who is feared by others.
Must also because of this fear other men.
Wild, unrestrained! It will never come to an end!
The multitudes are peaceful and happy;
Like climbing a terrace in springtime to feast at the t'ai-lao sacrifice.
But I am tranquil and quiet--not yet having given any sign.
Like a child who has not yet smiled.
Tired and exhausted--as though I have no place to return.
The multitudes all have surplus.
I alone seem to be lacking;
Mine is the mind of a fool -- ignorant and stupid!
The common people discriminate
and make fine distinctions;
I alone am muddled and confused.
Formless am I! Like the ocean;
Shapeless am I! As though I have nothing in which I can rest.
The masses all have their reasons for acting;
I alone am stupid and obstinate like a rustic.
But my desires alone differ from those of others--For I value drawing sustenance from the Mother.
(Waley)
Banish learning, and there will be no more grieving.
Between wet and dry
What after all is the difference?
Can it be compared to the difference between good and bad?
The saying 'what others avoid I too must avoid'
How false and superficial it is!
All men, indeed, are wreathed in smiles.
As though feasting after the Great Sacrifice,
As though going up to the Spring Carnival.
I am alone, like a child that has not yet given sign:
Like a child that has not yet smiled.
I am alone, and drift, as though I belonged nowhere.
All men have enough and to spare;
I seem to have lost everything.
Mine is indeed the mind of a very idiot,
So dull am I.
The world is full of people that shine;
I am dark.
They look lively and self-assured;
I alone, depressed.
I seem unsettled as the ocean;
Blown adrift, never brought to a stop.
All men can be put to some use;
I alone and intractable and boorish.
But wherein I am most different from men
Is that I prize no sustenance that comes not from the Mother's breast.

(Lin)
Banish Learning, and vexations end.
Between "Ah!" and "Ough!"
How much difference is there?
Between "good" and "evil"
How much difference is there?
That which men fear
Is indeed to be feared;
But, alas, distant yet is the dawn
(of awakening!)
The people of the world are merry-making,
As if eating of the sacrificial offerings.
As if mounting the terrace in Spring;
I am alone, mild, like one unemployed.
Like a new-born babe that cannot smile,
Untethered, like one without a home.
The people of the world have enough and to spare,
But I am like one left out,
My heart must be that of a fool,
Being muddled, nebulous.
The vulgar are knowing, luminous;
I alone am dull, confused.
The vulgar are clever, self-assured;
I alone, depressed.
Patient as the sea,
Adrift, seemingly aimless
The people of the world all have purpose;
I alone appear stubborn and uncouth.
I alone differ from the other people,
And value drawing sustenance from the Mother.

(Cleary)
Detach from learning and you have no worries.
How far apart are yes and yeah?
How far apart are good and bad?
The things people fear cannot but be feared.
Wild indeed the uncentered!
Most people celebrate as if they were barbecuing a slaughtered cow.

or taking in the springtime vistas:
I alone am aloof,
showing no sign,
like an infant that doesn't yet smile,
riding buoyantly
if with nowhere to go.
Most people have too much;
I alone seem to be missing something.
Mine is indeed the mind of an ignoramus
in its unadulterated simplicity.
Ordinary people try to shine;
I alone seem to be dark.
Ordinary people try to be on the alert;
I alone am unobtrusive,
calm as the ocean depths,
buoyant as if anchored nowhere.
Most people have ways and means;
I alone am unsophisticated
and simple.
I alone am different from people
in that I value seeking food from the mother.

(Feng&English)
Give up learning, and put an end to your troubles.
Is there a difference between yes and no?
Is there a difference between good and evil?
Must I fear what others fear?
What nonsense!
Other people are contented.

enjoying the sacrificial feast of the ox.
In spring some go to the park,
and climb the terrace.
But I am alone, drifting, not knowing where I am.
I am alone, without a place to go.
Others have more than they need.
but I alone have nothing.
I am a fool. Oh, yes! I am confused.

Others are clear and bright.
But I alone am dim and weak.
Others are sharp and clever.
But I alone am dull and stupid.
Oh, I drift like waves of the sea.
Without direction, like restless wind.
Everyone else is busy.
But I alone am aimless and depressed.
I am different.
I am nourished by the great mother.
It lies in the nature of Grand Virtue
To follow the Tao and the Tao alone.
Now what is the Tao?
It is something elusive and evasive.
Evasive and elusive!
And yet it contains within itself a form.
Elusive and evasive!
And yet it contains within itself a substance.
Shadowy and dim!
And yet it contains within itself a Core of Vitality.
The Core of Vitality is very real.
It contains within itself and unfailing Sincerity.
Throughout the ages Its Name has been preserved.
In order to recall the Beginning of all things.
How do I know the ways of all things at the Beginning?
By what is within me.

In his every movement a man of great virtue
Follows the way and the way only.
As a thing was is shadowy, indistinct.
Indistinct and shadowy, yet within it is an image.
Shadowy and indistinct, yet within it is a substance.
Dim and dark, yet within it is an essence.
This essence is quite genuine.
And within it is something that can be tested.
From the present back to antiquity
Its name never deserted it.
It serves as a means for inspecting the fathers of the multitude.
How do I know that the fathers of the multitude are like that?
By means of this.

The all-embracing quality of the great virtue follows alone from the Tao.
The thing that is called Tao is eluding and vague.
Vague and eluding, there is in it the form.
Eluding and vague, in it are things.
Deep and obscure, in it is the essence.
The essence is very real; in it are evidences.
From the time of old until now, its name (manifestations) ever remain.
By which we may see the beginning of all things.
How do I know that the beginning of all things are so?
Through this (Tao).

The character of great virtue follows along from the Way.
As for the nature of the Way--it's shapeless and formless.
Formless! Shapeless! Inside there are images.
Shapeless! Formless! Inside there are things.
Hidden! Obscure! Inside there are essences.
These essences are very real;
Inside them is the proof.
From present back to the past.
Its name has never gone away.
It is by this that we comply with the father of the multitude of things.
How do we know that the father of the multitude is so?
By this.
(Waley)
Such the scope of the All-pervading Power
That it alone can act through the Way.
For the Way is a thing
impalpable, incommensurable.
Incommensurable. Impalpable.
Yet latent in it are forms;
Impalpable, incommensurable
Yet within it are entities.
Shadowy it is and dim;
Yet within it there is a force.
A force that though rarefied
Is none the less efficacious.
From the time of old till now
Its charge has not departed
But cheers onward the many warriors.
How do I know that the many warriors are so?
Through this.

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

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

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

Curl and you will be straight.

Keep empty and you will be filled.

Grow old and you will be renewed.

Have a little and you will gain.

Have much and you will be confused.

Therefore, the Sage embraces the One.

And becomes a Pattern to all under Heaven.

He does not make a show of himself.

Hence he shines;

Does not justify himself,

Hence he becomes known;

Does not boast of his ability,

Hence he gets his credit;

Does not brandish his success,

Hence he endures;

Does not compete with anyone.

Hence no one can compete with him.

Indeed, the ancient saying: "Bend and you will remain whole" is no idle word.

Nay, if you have really attained wholeness, everything will flock to you.

Bowed down then preserved;

Bent then straight;

Hollow then full;

Worn then new;

A little then benefited;

A lot then perplexed.

Therefore the Sage embraces the One and is a model for the empire.

He does not show himself, and so is conspicuous;

He does not consider himself right, and so is illusory;

He does not brag, and so has merit;

He does not boast, and so endures.

It is because he does not contend that no one in the empire is in a position to contend with him.

The way the ancients had it, 'Bowed down then preserved', is no empty saying. Truly it enables one to be preserved to the end.

To yield is to be preserved whole.

To be bent is to become straight.

To be empty is to be full.

To be worn out is to be renewed.

To have little is to possess.

To have plenty is to be perplexed.

Therefore the Sage embraces the One

And becomes a model of the world.

He does not show himself; therefore he is luminous.

He does not justify himself; therefore he becomes prominent.

He does not boast of himself; therefore he is given credit.

He does not brag; therefore he can endure long.

It is precisely because he does not contend that the world cannot compete with him.

Is the ancient saying, "To yield is to be preserved whole," empty words?

Truly he will be preserved and (prominence, etc.) will come to him.

Bent over, you will be preserved whole:

When twisted, you'll be upright:

When hollowed out, you'll be full;

When worn out, you'll be renewed;

When you have little, you'll attain much;

With much, you'll be confused.

Therefore the Sage holds on to the One and in this way becomes the shepherd of the world.

He does not show himself off; therefore he becomes prominent.

He does not put himself on display; therefore he brightly shines.

He does not brag about himself; therefore he receives credit.

He does not praise his own deeds; therefore he can long endure.

It is only because he does not compete that, therefore, no one is able to compete with him.

The so-called "Bent over you'll be preserved whole" of the ancients

Was a expression that was really close to it!

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

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

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

(Feng&English)
Yield and overcome;
Bend and be straight;
Empty and be full;
Wear out and be new;
Have a little and gain;
Have much and be confused.
Therefore the wise embrace the one
And set an example to all.
Not putting on a display.
They shine forth.
Not justifying themselves.
They are distinguished.
Not boasting.
They receive recognition.
Not bragging.
They never falter.
They do not quarrel.
So no one quarrels with them.
Therefore the ancients say,
"Yield and overcome."
Is that an empty saying?
Be really whole,
And all things will come to you.
(Wu)—TWENTY-THREE
Only simple and quiet words will
ripen of themselves.
For a whirlwind does not last a
whole morning.
Nor does a sudden shower last a
whole day.
Who is the author? Heaven-and-
Earth!
Even Heaven-and-Earth cannot
make such violent things last long;
How much truer is it of the rash
efforts of men?
Hence, he who cultivates the Tao
is one with the Tao;
He who practices Virtue is one
with Virtue;
And he who courts after Loss is
one with Loss.
To be one with Tao is to be a
welcome accession to the Tao;
To be one with Virtue is to be a
welcome accession to Virtue;
To be one with Loss is to be a
welcome accession to Loss.
Deficiency of faith on your part
Entails faithlessness on the part
of others.

(Lau)
To use words but rarely
Is to be natural.
Hence a gusty wind cannot last
all morning, and a sudden
downpour cannot last all day. Who
is it that produces these? Heaven
and earth. If even heaven and earth
cannot go on for ever, much less
can man. That is why one follows
the way.
A man of the way conforms to
the way; a man of virtue conforms
to virtue; a man of loss conforms
to loss. He who conforms to the
way is gladly accepted by the way; he
who conforms to virtue is
gladly accepted by virtue; he who
conforms to loss is gladly accepted
by loss.
When there is not enough faith,
there is lack of good faith.

(Chan)
Nature says few words.
For this reason a whirlwind does
not last a whole morning.
Nor does a rainstorm last a
whole day.
What causes them?
It is Heaven and Earth (Nature).
If even Heaven and Earth cannot
make them last long,
How much less can man?
Therefore he who follows Tao is
identified with Tao.
He who follows virtue is
identified with virtue.
He who abandons (Tao) is
identified with the abandonment
(of Tao).
He who is identified with Tao --
Tao is also happy to have him.
He who is identified with virtue
-- virtue is also happy to have him.
He who is identified with the
abandonment (of Tao) -- the
abandonment (of Tao) is also
happy to abandon him.
It is only when one does not have
enough faith in others that others
will have no faith in him.

(Henricks)
To rarely speak--such is the way
of Nature.
Fierce winds don't last the whole
morning;
Torrential rains don't last the
whole day.
Who makes these things?
If even Heaven and Earth can't
make these last long--
How much the more is this true
for man?!
Therefore, one who devotes
himself to the Way is one with the
Way;
One who devotes himself to
Virtue is one with that Virtue;
And one who devotes himself to
losing is one with that loss.
To the one who is one with
Virtue, the Way also gives Virtue;
While for the one who is one
with his loss, the Way also
disregards him.
(Waley)
To be always talking is against nature.
For the same reason a hurricane never lasts a whole morning, nor a rainstorm all day.
Who is it that makes the wind and the rain?
It is Heaven-and-Earth.
And if even Heaven-and-Earth cannot blow or pour for long, how much less should man?
Truly, if one uses the Way as one's instrument, the results will be like the Way; if one uses the 'power' as one's instrument, the results will be like the power.
If one uses what is the reverse of the 'power' as one's instrument, the results will be the reverse of the 'power'.
For those who have conformed themselves to the Way, the Way readily lends its power.
To those who have conformed themselves to the power, the power readily lends more power.
While to those who conform themselves to inefficacy, inefficacy readily lends its ineffectiveness.
'It is by not believing in people that you turn them into liars.'

(Lin)
Nature says few words:
Hence it is that a squall lasts not a whole morning.
A rainstorm continues not a whole day.
Where do they come from?
From Nature.
Even Nature does not last long (in its utterances).
How much less should human beings?
Therefore it is that:
He who follows the Tao is identified with the Tao.
He who follows Virtue is identified with Virtue.
He who abandons (Tao) is identified with abandonment (of Tao).
He who is identified with Tao -- Tao is also glad to welcome him.
He who is identified with Virtue -- Virtue is glad to welcome him.
He who is identified with abandonment -- Abandonment is also glad to welcome him.
He who has not enough faith Will not be able to command faith from others.

(Cleary)
To speak rarely is natural.
That is why a gusty wind doesn't last the morning.
a downpour of rain doesn't last the day.
Who does this? Heaven and earth.
If even heaven and earth cannot go on forever,
how much less can human beings!
Therefore those who follow the Way assimilate to the Way;
the virtuous assimilate to virtue.
those who have lost assimilate to loss.
Those who assimilate to the Way are happy to gain it,
those who assimilate to virtue are happy to gain it,
and those who assimilate to loss are also happy to gain it.
When trust is insufficient, there is distrust.

(Feng & English)
To talk little is natural.
High winds do not last all morning.
Heavy rain does not last all day.
Why is this? Heaven and earth!
If heaven and earth cannot make things eternal.
How is it possible for man?
He who follows the Tao
Is at one with the Tao.
He who is virtuous
Experiences Virtue.
He who loses the way
Is lost.
When you are at one with the Tao.
The Tao welcomes you.
When you are on with Virtue.
The Virtue is always there.
When you are at one with loss.
The loss is experience willingly.
He who does not trust enough
Will not be trusted.
(Wu)--TWENTY-FOUR
One on tip-toe cannot stand.
One astride cannot walk.
One who displays himself does not shine.
One who justifies himself has no glory.
One who boasts of his own ability has no merit.
One who parades his own success will not endure.

In Tao these things are called "unwanted food and extraneous growths." Which are loathed by all things. Hence a man of Tao does not set his heart upon them.

(Lau)
He who tip-toes cannot stand; he who strides cannot walk:
He who shows himself is not conspicuous;
He who considers himself right is not illustrious;
He who brags will have no merit;
He who boasts will not endure.
From the point of view of the way these are 'excessive food and useless exercises'. As there are Things that detest them. He who has the way does not abide in them.

(Chan)
He who stands on tip-toe is not steady.
He who strides forward does not go.
He who shows himself is not prominent.
He who justifies himself is not luminous.
He who boasts of himself is not given credit.
He who brags does not endure long.
From the point of view of Tao, these are like remnants of food and tumors of action.
Which all creatures detest.
Therefore those who possess Tao turn away from them.

(Henricks)
One who boasts is not established; One who shows himself off does not become prominent;
One who puts himself on display does not brightly shine;
One who brags about himself gets no credit;
One who praises himself does not long endure.

In the Way, such things are called:
"Surplus food and redundant action."
And with things--there are those who hate them.
Therefore, the one with the Way in them does not dwell.
(Waley)  
‘He who stands on tiptoe, does not stand firm;  
He who takes the longest strides, does not walk the faster;  
He who does his own looking sees little,  
He who defines himself is not therefore distinct.  
He who boasts of what he will do succeeds in nothing;  
He who is proud of his work, achieves nothing that endures.  
Of these, from the standpoint of the Way, it is said:  
‘Pass round superfluous dishes to those that have already had enough,  
And no creature but will reject them in disgust.’  
That is why he that possesses Tao does not linger.

(Lin)  
He who stands on tiptoe does not stand (firm);  
He who strains his strides does not walk (well);  
He who reveals himself is not luminous;  
He who justifies himself is not far-famed;  
He who boasts of himself is not given credit;  
He who prizes himself is not chief among men.  
These in the eyes of Tao  
Are called ‘the dregs and tumors of Virtue.’  
Which are things of disgust.  
Therefore the man of Tao spurns them.

(Cleary)  
Those on tiptoe don’t stand up,  
those who take long strides don’t walk;  
those who see themselves are not perceptive,  
those who assert themselves are not illustrious;  
those who glorify themselves have no merit,  
those who are proud of themselves do not last.  
On the Way, these are called overconsumption and excess activity.  
Some people disdain them,  
so those with the Way abstain.

(Feng&English)  
He who stands on tiptoes is not steady.  
He who strides cannot maintain the pace.  
He who makes a show is not enlightened.  
He who is self-righteous is not respected.  
He who boasts achieves nothing.  
He who brags will not endure.  
According to the Tao, “These are extra food and unnecessary luggage.”  
They do not bring happiness.  
Therefore the followers of the Tao avoid them.
There was something undefined and yet complete in itself. Born before Heaven and Earth. Silent and Boundless. Standing alone without change. Yet prevailing all without fail. It may be regarded as the Mother of all the world.

I do not know its name: I style it "Tao". And, in the absence of a better word, call it "The Great." To be great is to go on. To go on is to be far. To be far is to return. Hence, "Tao is great. Heaven is great. Earth is great. King is great." Thus, the king is one of the great four in the Universe. Man follows the ways of the Earth. The Earth follows the ways of Heaven. Heaven follows the ways of Tao. Tao follows its own ways.

(Lau) There is a thing confusedly formed. Born before heaven and earth. Silent and void It stands alone and does not change. Goes round and does not weary. It is capable of being the mother of the world. I know not its name So I style it 'the way'. I give it the makeshift name of 'the great'. Being great, it is further described as receding. Receding, it is described as far away. Being far away, it is described as turning back. Hence the way is great; heaven is great; earth is great; and king is also great. Within the realm there are four things that are great, and the king counts as one. Man models himself on earth. Earth on heaven. Heaven on the way. And the way on that which is naturally so.

(Chan) There was something undifferentiated and yet complete. Which existed before heaven and earth. Soundless and formless, it depends on nothing and does not change. It operates everywhere and is free from danger. It may be considered the mother of the universe. I do not know its name; I call it Tao. If forced to give its name, I shall call it Great. Now being great means functioning everywhere. Functioning everywhere means far-reaching. Being far-reaching means returning to the original point. Therefore Tao is great. Heaven is great. Earth is great. And the king is also great. There are four great things in the universe, and the king is one of them. Man models himself after Earth. Earth models itself after Heaven. Heaven models itself after Tao. And Tao models itself after Nature.

(Henricks) There was something formed out of chaos. That was born before Heaven and Earth. Quiet and still! Pure and deep! It stands on its own and doesn't change. It can be regarded as the mother of Heaven and Earth. I do not yet know its name: I "style" it "the Way." Were I forced to give it a name, I would call it "the Great." "Great" means "to depart"; "To depart" means "to be far away"; And "to be far away" means to "return." The Way is great; Heaven is great; Earth is great; And the king is also great. In the country there are four greats, and the king occupies one place among them. Man models himself on Earth; The Earth models itself on Heaven; Heaven models itself on the Way; And the Way models itself on that which is so on its own.
(Waley)
There was something formless yet complete.
That existed before heaven and earth:
   Without sound, without substance.
   Dependent on nothing, unchanging.
   All pervading, unfailing.
   One may think of it as the mother of all things under heaven.
   Its true name we don’t know;
‘Way’ is the by-name that we give it.
Were I forced to say what class of things it belongs I should call it Great (tao).
Now ta also means passing on, and passing on means going Far Away,
   And going far away means returning.
   Thus just as Tao has ‘this greatness’ and as earth has it and as heaven has it, so may the ruler also have it. Thus, within the realm there are four portions of greatness’, and on belongs to the king. The ways of men are conditioned by those of earth. The ways of earth, by those of heaven. The ways of heaven by those of Tao, and the ways of Tao by the Self-so.

(Lin)
Before the Heaven and Earth existed
There was something nebulous;
Silent, isolated.
Standing alone, changing not.
Eternally revolving without fail.
Worthy to be the Mother of All Things.
I do not know its name
And address it as Tao.
If forced to give it a name, I shall call it “Great.”
Being great implies reaching out in space,
   Reaching out in space implies far-reaching
   Far-reaching implies reversion to the original point.
Therefore:
   Tao is Great,
   The Heaven is great,
   The Earth is great.
   The King is also great.
   These are the Great Four in the universe,
   And the King is one of them.
Man models himself after the Earth;
The Earth models itself after Heaven;
The Heaven models itself after Tao;
Tao models itself after Nature.

(Cleary)
Something undifferentiated was born before heaven and earth;
   still and silent, standing alone and unchanging,
   going through cycles unending, able to be mother to the world.
   I do not know its name;
   I label it the Way.
   Imposing on it a name, I call it Great.
   Greatness means it goes;
   going means reaching afar;
   reaching afar means return.
   Therefore the Way is great.
   Heaven is great.
   Earth is great.
   And kingship is also great.
   Among domains are four greats, of which kingship is one.
   Humanity emulates earth,
   earth emulates heaven,
   heaven emulates the Way,
   the Way emulates Nature.

(Feng & English)
Something mysteriously formed,
   Born before heaven and earth.
   In the silence and the void,
   Standing alone and unchanging.
   Ever present and in motion.
   Perhaps it is the mother of ten thousand things.
   I do not know its name
   Call it Tao.
   For lack of a better word, call it great.
   Being great, it flows.
   It flows far away,
   Having gone far it returns.
   Therefore, "Tao is great;
   Heaven is great;
   Earth is great;
   The king is also great;"
   These are the four great powers of the universe,
   And the king is one of them.
   Man follows the earth.
   Earth follows heaven.
   Heaven follows the Tao.
   Tao follows what is natural.
(Wu)—TWENTY-SIX
Heaviness is the root of lightness.
Serenity is the master of restlessness.
Therefore, the Sage, traveling all day,
Does not part with the baggage-wagon;
Though there may be gorgeous sights to see,
He stays at ease in his own home.
Why should a lord of ten thousand chariots
Display his lightness to the world?
To be light is to be separated from one's root;
To be restless is to lose one's self-mastery.

(Lau)
The heavy is the root of the light.
The still is the lord of the restless.
Therefore the gentleman when traveling all day
Never lets the heavily laden carts out of his sight.
It is only when he is safely behind walls and watch-towers
That he rests peacefully and is above worries.
How, then, should a ruler of ten thousand chariots
Make light his own person in the eyes of the empire?
If light, then the root is lost;
If restless, then the lord is lost.

(Chun)
The heavy is the root of the light.
The tranquil is the ruler of the hasty.
Therefore the sage travels all day
Without leaving his baggage.
Even at the sight of magnificent scenes,
He remains leisurely and indifferent.
How is it that a lord of ten thousand chariots
Should behave lightheartedly in his empire?
If he is lighthearted, the minister will be destroyed.
If he is hasty, the ruler is lost.

(Herrick)
The heavy is the root of the light;
Tranquility is the Lord of agitation.
Therefore the gentleman, in traveling all day, does not get far away from his luggage carts.
When he's safely inside a walled-in protected hosiel and resting at ease—only then does he transcend all concern.

How can the king of ten thousand chariots treat his own person more lightly than the whole land?!
If you regard things too lightly, then you lose the basic;
If you're agitated, you lose the "lord."
(Waley)
As the heavy must be the foundation of the light.
So quietness is lord and master of activity.
Truly, 'A man of consequence though he travels all day
Will not let himself be separated from his baggage-wagon.
However magnificent the view, he sits quiet and dispassionate'.
How much less, then, must the lord of ten thousand chariots
Allow himself to be lighter than these he rules!
If he is light, the foundation is lost;
If he is active, the lord and master is lost.

(Lin)
The Solid is the root of the light;
The Quiescent is the master of the Hasty.
Therefore the Sage travels all day
Yet never leaves his provision-cart.
In the midst of honor and glory, he lives leisurely, undisturbed.
How can a ruler of a great country
Make light of his body in the empire?
In light frivolity, the Center is lost;
In hasty action, self-mastery is lost.

(Cleary)
Gravity is the root of lightness;
calm is the master of excitement.
Thereby do exemplary people travel all day
without leaving their equipment.
Though they have a look of prosperity,
their resting place is transcendent.
What can be done about heads of state
who take the world lightly in their own self-interest?
Lack of gravity loses servants of state;
instability loses heads of state.

(Feng & English)
The heavy is the root of the light;
The still is the master of unrest.
Therefore the sage, traveling all day.
Does not lose sight of his baggage.
Though there are beautiful things to be seen.
He remains unattached and calm.
Why should the lord of ten thousand chariots act lightly in public?
To be light is to lose one's root.
To be restless is to lose one's control.
Good walking leaves no track behind it; Good speech leaves no mark to be picked at; Good calculation makes no use of counting slips; Good shutting makes no use of bolt and bar, And yet nobody can undo it; Good tying makes no use of rope and knot, And yet nobody can untie it. Hence, the Sage is always good at saving men. And therefore nobody is abandoned; Always good at saving things, And therefore nothing is wasted. This is called “following the guidance of the Inner Light.” Hence, good men are teachers of good men. While bad men are the charges of good men. Not to revere one’s teacher, Not to cherish one’s charge, Is to be on the wrong road, however intelligent one may be. This is an essential tenet of the Tao.
(Waley) Perfect activity leaves no track behind it; Perfect speech is like a jade-worker whose tool leaves no mark. The perfect reckoner needs no counting-slips; The perfect door has neither bolt nor bar. Yet cannot be opened. The perfect knot needs neither rope nor twine, Yet cannot be untied. Therefore the Sage is all the time in the most perfect way helping men, He certainly does not turn his back on men; Is all the time in the most perfect way helping creatures, He certainly does not turn his back on creatures. This is called resorting to the Light. Truly, the perfect man is the teacher of the imperfect; But the imperfect is the stock-in-trade of the perfect man. He who does not respect his teacher, He who does not take care of his stock-in-trade, Much learning though he possess, is far astray. This is the essential secret.

(Lin) A good runner leaves no track. A good speech leaves no flaws to attack. A good reckoner makes use of no counters. A well shut door makes use of no bolts. And yet cannot be opened. A well-tied knot makes use of no rope. And yet cannot be untied. Therefore the Sage is good at helping men; For that reason there is no rejected (useless) person. He is good at saving things; For that reason there is nothing rejected. --This is called stealing the Light. Therefore the good man is the Teacher of the bad. And the bad is the lesson of the good. He who neither values his teacher Nor loves the lesson Is one gone far astray, Though he be learned. --Such is the subtle secret.

(Cleary) Good works are trackless. Good words are flawless. Good planning isn't calculating. What is well closed has no bolt locking it. But cannot be opened. What is well bound has no rope confining it. But cannot be untied. Therefore sages always consider it good to save people, so that there are no wasted humans; They always consider it good to save beings, so that there are no wasted beings. So good people are teachers of people who are not good. People who are not good are students of people who are good. Those who do not honor teachers or care for students are greatly deluded, even if knowledgeable. This is called an essential subtlety.

(Feng & English) A good walker leaves no tracks; A good speaker makes no slips; A good reckoner needs no tally; A good door needs no lock. Yet none can open it. Good binding requires no knots. Yet no one can loosen it. Therefore the sage takes care of all men And abandons no one. He takes care of all things And abandons nothing. This is called "following the light." What is a good man? A teacher of a bad man. What is a bad man? A good man's charge. If the teacher is not respected. And the student not cared for. Confusion will arise, however clever one is. This is the crux of mystery.
(Lau)  
Know the male  
But keep to the role of the female  
And be a ravine to the empire.  
If you are a ravine to the empire,  
Then the constant virtue will not  
Desert you  
And you will again return to  
Being a babe.  
Know the white  
But keep to role of the black  
And be a model to the empire.  
If you are a model to the empire,  
Then the constant virtue will not  
Be wanting  
And you will return to the  
Infinite.  
Know honour  
But keep to the role of the  
Disgraced  
And be a valley to the empire.  
If you are a valley to the empire,  
Then the constant virtue will be  
Sufficient  
And you will return to being the  
Uncarved block.  
When the uncarved block  
Shatters it becomes vessels.  
The sage makes use of these and  
Becomes the lord over the officials.  
Hence the greatest cutting  
Does not sever.

(Chan)  
He who knows the male (active  
Force) and keeps to the female (the  
Passive force or receptive element)  
Becomes the ravine of the world.  
Being the ravine of the world,  
He will never depart from eternal  
Virtue.  
But returns to the state of  
Infancy.  
He who know the white (glory)  
And yet keeps to the black  
(Humility),  
Becomes the model for the world.  
Being the model for the world,  
He will never deviate from  
Eternal virtue.  
But returns to the state of  
The Ultimate of Non-being.  
He who knows glory but keeps to  
Humility,  
Becomes the valley of the world.  
Being the valley of the world,  
He will be proficient in eternal  
Virtue,  
And returns to the state of  
Simplicity (uncarved wood).  
When the uncarved wood is  
Broken up, it is turned into  
Concrete things (as Tao is  
Transformed into the myriad  
Things).  
But when the sage uses it, he  
Becomes the leading official.  
Therefore the great ruler does not  
Cut up.

(Henricks)  
When you know the male yet  
Hold to the female.  
You'll be the ravine of the  
Country.  
When you're the ravine of the  
Country.  
Your constant virtue will not  
Leave.  
And when your constant virtue  
Doesn't leave.  
You'll return to the state of the  
Infant.  
When you know the pure yet  
Hold on to the soiled.  
You'll be the valley of the  
Country.  
When you're the valley of the  
Country.  
Your constant virtue is complete.  
And when your constant virtue is  
Complete,  
You'll return to the state of  
Uncarved wood.  
When you know the white yet hold  
On to the black,  
You'll be the model for the country.  
And when you're the model of the  
Country.  
Your constant virtue will not go  
Astray.  
And when your constant virtue does  
Not go astray,  
You'll return to the condition which  
Has no limit.  
When uncarved wood is cut up, it's  
Turned into vessels;  
When the Sage is used, he becomes  
The Head of Officials.  
Truly, great carving is done without  
Splitting up.
(Waley)
'He who knows the male, yet cleaves to what is female
Becomes like a ravine, receiving all things under heaven.'
And being such a ravine
He knows all the time a power that he never calls upon in vain.
This is returning to the state of infancy.
He who knows the white, yet cleaves to the black
Becomes the standard by which all things are tested;
And being such a standard
He has all the time a power that never errs,
He returns to the Limitless.
He who knows glory, yet cleaves to ignominy
Becomes like a valley that receives into it all things under heaven.
And being such a valley
He has all the time a power that suffices;
He returns to the state of an Uncarved Block.
Now when a block is sawed up it is made into implements;
But when the Sage uses it, it becomes Chief of all Ministers.
Truly, 'The greatest carver does the least cutting'.

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

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

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

Does anyone want to take the world and do what he wants with it?
I don't see how he can succeed.
The world is a sacred vessel,
which must not be tampered with
or grabbed after.
To tamper with it is to spoil it,
and the grasp it is to lose it.
In fact, for all things there is a
time for going ahead,
and a time for following behind;
A time for slow-breathing and a
time for fast breathing;
A time to grow in strength and a
time to decay;
A time to be up and a time to be
down.

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

(Lau)
Whoever takes the empire and
wishes to do anything to it I see
will have no respite.
The empire is a sacred vessel and
nothing should be done to it.
Whoever does anything to it will
ruin it; whoever lays hold of it will
lose it.
Hence some things lead and some
follow;
Some breathe gently and some
breathe hard;
Some are strong and some are
weak;
Some destroy and some are
destroyed.
Therefore the sage avoids excess,
extravagance, and arrogance.

(Chan)
When one desire to take over the
empire and act on it (interfere with
it).
I see that he will not succeed.
The empire is a spiritual thing,
and should not be acted on.
He who acts on it harms it.
He who holds on to it loses it.
Among creatures some lead and
some follow.
Some blow hot and some blow
cold.
Some are strong and some are
weak.
Some may break and some may
fail.
Therefore the sage discards the
extremes, the extravagant, and the
excessive.

(Henricks)
For those who would like to take
control of the world and act on it--
I see that with this they simply
will not succeed.
The world is a sacred vessel;
It is not something that can be
acted upon.
Those who act on it destroy it;
Those who hold on to it lose it.
With things--some go forward,
others follow;
Some are hot, others blow cold;
Some are firm, others submissive
and weak.
Some rise up while others fall
down.
Therefore the Sage:
Rejects the extreme, the
excessive, and the extravagant.
(Waley)
Those that would gain what is
under heaven by tampering with it-
I have seen that they do not succeed.
For that which is under heaven is
like a holy vessel, dangerous to
tamper with.
Those that tamper with it, harm it.
Those that grab at it, lose it.
For among the creatures of the
world some go in front, some follow:
Some blow hot when others would be blowing cold.
Some are feeling vigorous just
when others are worn out.
Some are leading just when
others will be following.
Therefore the Sage 'discards the
absolute, the all-inclusive, the extreme.'

(Lin)
There are those who will conquer
the world
And make of it (what they
conceive or desire).
I see that they will not succeed.
(For) the world is God's own
Vessel
It cannot be made (by human
interference).
He who makes it spoils it.
He who holds it loses it.
For: Some things go forward,
Some things follow behind;
Some blow hot,
And some blow cold;
Some are strong,
And some are weak;
Some may break,
And some may fall.
Hence the Sage eschews excess,
eschews extravagance,
eschews pride.

(Cleary)
Should you want to take the
world and contrive to do so.
I see you won't manage to finish.
The most sublime instrument in
the world cannot be contrived.
Those who contrive spoil it;
those who cling lose it.
So creatures sometimes go and
sometimes follow.
sometimes puff and sometimes
blow.
are sometimes strong and
sometimes weak.
begin sometime and end
 sometime;
therefore sages remove extremes,
remove extravagance,
remove arrogance.

(Feng&English)
Do you think you can take over
the universe and improve it?
I do not believe it can be done.
The universe is sacred.
You cannot improve it.
If you try to change it, you will
ruin it.
If you try to hold it, you will lose it.
So sometimes things are ahead
and sometimes they are behind.
Sometimes breathing is hard;
sometimes it comes easily;
Sometimes there is strength and
sometimes there is weakness;
Sometimes one is up and
sometimes down.
Therefore the sage avoids
extremes, excesses, and
complacency.
(Wu)--THIRTY
He who knows how to guide a
ruler in the path of Tao
Does not try to override the
world with force of arms.
It is in the nature of a military
weapon to turn against its wielder.
Wherever armies are stationed,
thorny bushes grow.
After a great war, bad years
invariably follow.
What you want is to protect
efficiently your won state,
But not to aim at self-
aggrandizement.
After you have attained your
purpose,
You must not parade your
success,
You must not boast of your
ability.
You must not feel proud,
You must rather regret that you
had not been able to prevent the
war.
You must never think of
conquering others by force.
For to be over-developed is to
hasten decay.
And this is against Tao,
And what is against Tao will
soon cease to be.

(Lau)
One who assists the ruler of men
by means of the way does not
intimidate the empire by a show of
arms.
This is something which is liable
to rebound.
Where troops have encamped
There will brambles grow;
In the wake of a mighty army
Bad harvests follow without fail.
One who is good aims only at
bringing his campaign to a
conclusion and dare not thereby
intimidate.
Bring it to a conclusion but do
not boast;
bring it to a conclusion but do
not brag;
bring it to a conclusion but do
not be arrogant;
bring it to a conclusion but only
when there is no choice;
bring it to a conclusion but do
not intimidate.
A creature in its prime doing
harm to the old
Is known as going against the
way.
That which goes against the way
will come to an early end.

(Chan)
He who assists the ruler with
Tao does not dominate the world
with force.
The use of force usually brings
reap.
Wherever armies are stationed,
briers and thorns grow.
Great wars are always followed
by famines.
A good (general) achieves his
purpose and stops.
But does not dare to dominate the
world.
He achieves his purpose but does
not brag about it.
He achieves his purpose but does
not boast about it.
He achieves his purpose but is
not proud of it.
He achieves his purpose but only
as an unavoidable step.
He achieves his purpose but does
not aim to dominate.
(For) after things reach their
prime, they begin to grow old,
Which means being contrary to
Tao.
Whatever is contrary to Tao will
soon perish.

(Henricks)
Those who assist their rulers in
the Way.
Don't use weapons to commit
violence in the world.
Such deeds easily rebound.
In places where armies are
stationed, thorns and brambles will
grow.
The good general achieves his
result and that's all;
He does not use the occasion to
seize strength from it.
He achieves his result but does
not become arrogant;
He achieves his result but does
not praise his deeds;
He achieves his result and yet
does not brag.
He achieves his result, yet he
abides with the result because he
has no choice.
This is called achieving one's
result without using force.
When things reach their prime,
they get old;
We call this "not the Way."
What is not the Way will come to
an early end.
(Waley)
He who by Tao purposes to help
a ruler of men
Will oppose all conquest by force
of arms:
For such things are wont to
rebound.
Where armies are, thorns and
brambles grow.
The raising of a great host
Is followed by a year of dearth.
Therefore a good general effects
his purpose and then stops;
he does not take further
advantage of his victory.
Fulfills his purpose and does not
profit in what he has done;
Fulfils his purpose and does not
boast of what he has done;
Fulfills his purpose, but takes no
pride in what he has done;
Fulfills his purpose, but only as a
step that could not be avoided.
Fulfils his purpose, but without
violence;
For what has a time of vigour
also has a time of decay.
This is against Tao.
And what is against Tao will
soon perish.

(Lin)
He who by Tao purposes to help
the ruler of men
Will oppose all conquest by force
of arms.
For such things are wont to
rebound.
Where armies are, thorns and
brambles grow.
The raising of a great host
Is followed by a year of dearth.
Therefore a good general effects
his purpose and stops.
He dares not rely upon the
strength of arms;
Effects his purpose and does not
profit in it;
Effects his purpose and does not
boast of it;
Effects his purpose and does not
take pride in it;
Effects his purpose as a
regrettable necessity;
Effects his purpose but does not
love violence.
(For) such things age after
reaching their prime.
That (violence) would be against
the Tao.
And he who is against the Tao
perishes young.

(Cleary)
Those who assist human leaders
with the Way
do not coerce the world with
weapons.
for these things are apt to
backfire.
Brambles grow where an army
has been;
there are always bad years after
a war.
Therefore the good are effective.
that is all:
they do not presume to grab
power thereby:
they are effective but not
conceited.
effective but not proud.
effective but not arrogant.
They are effective when they
have to be.
effective but not coercive.
If you peak in strength, you then
age;
this, it is said, is unguided.
The unguided soon come to an
end.

(Feng&English)
Whenever you advise a ruler in
the way of Tao.
Counsel him not to use force to
conquer the universe.
For this would only cause
resistance.
Thorn bushes spring up wherever
the army has passed.
Lean years follow in the wake of
a great war.
Just do what needs to be done.
Never take advantage of power.
Achieve results.
But never glory in them.
Achieve results.
But never boast.
Achieve results.
But never be proud.
Achieve results.
Because this is the natural way.
Achieve results.
But not through violence.
Force is followed by loss of
strength.
This is not the way of Tao.
That which goes against the Tao
comes to an early end.
(Wu)--THIRTY-ONE
Fine weapons of war augur evil.
Even things seem to hate them.
Therefore, a man of Tao does not
set his heart upon them.
In ordinary life, a gentleman
regards the left side as the place of
honour:
In war, the right side is the place
of honour.
As weapons are instruments of
evil.
They are not properly a
gentleman's instruments:
Only on necessity will he resort
to them.
For peace and quiet are dearest
to his heart.
And to him even a victory is no
cause for rejoicing.
To rejoice over a victory is to
rejoice over the slaughter of men!
Hence a man who rejoices over
the slaughter of men cannot expect
to thrive in the world of men.
On happy occasions the left side
is preferred:
On sad occasions the right side.
In the army, the Lieutenant
Commander stands on the left.
While the Commander-in-Chief
stands on the right.
This means that war is treated on
a par with a funeral service.
Because many people have been
killed, it is only right that
survivors should mourn for them.
Hence, even a victory is a
funeral.

(Lau)
It is because arms are
instruments of ill omen and there
are Things that detest them that
one who has the way does not
abide by their use.
The gentleman gives precedence
to the left when at home, but to the
right when he goes to war.
Arms are instruments of ill omen,
not instruments of the gentleman.
When one is compelled to use
them, it is best to do so without
relish.
There is no glory in victory, and
to glorify it despite this is to exult
in the killing of men.
One who exults in the killing of
men will never have his way in the
empire.
On occasions of rejoicing
precedence is given to the left;
on occasions of mourning
precedence is given to the right.
A lieutenant's place is on the left;
the general's place is on the right.
This means that it is mourning
rites that are observed.
When great numbers of people
are killed, one should weep over
them with sorrow.
When victorious in war, one
should observe the rites of
mourning.

(Chan)
Fine weapons are instruments of
ever.
They are hated by men.
Therefore those who possess Tao
turn away from them.
The good ruler when at home
honors the left (symbolic of good
omens).
When at war he honors the right
(symbolic of evil omens).
Weapons are instruments of evil,
not the instruments of a good ruler.
When he uses them unavoidably,
he regards calm restraint as the
best principle.
Even when he is victorious, he
does not regard it as praiseworthy.
For to praise victory is to delight
in the slaughter of men.
He who delights in the slaughter
of men will not succeed in the
empire.
In auspicious affairs, the left is
honored.
In unauspicious affairs, the right
is honored.
The lieutenant-general stands on
the left.
The senior general stands on the
right.
That is to say that the
arrangement follows that of
funeral ceremonies.
For the slaughter of the
multitude, let us weep with sorrow
and grief.
For a victory, let us observe the
occasion with funeral ceremonies.

(Henricks)
As for weapons--they are
instruments of ill omen.
And among things there are those
that hate them.
Therefore, the one who has the
Way, with them does not dwell.
When the gentleman is at home,
he honors the left;
When at war, he honors the right.
Therefore, weapons are not the
instruments of the gentleman--
Weapons are instruments of ill
omen.
When you have no choice but to
use them, it's best to remain
tranquil and calm.
You should never look upon
them as things of beauty.
If you see them as beautiful
things--this is to delight in the
killing of men.
And when you delight in the
killing of men, you'll not realize
your goal in the land.
Therefore, in happy events we
honor the left,
But in mourning we honor the
right.
Therefore, the lieutenant general
stands on the left;
And the supreme general stands on
the right.
Which is to say, they arrange
themselves as they would at a
funeral.
When multitudes of people are
killed, we stand before them in
sorrow and grief.
When we're victorious in battle, we
treat the occasion like a funeral
ceremony.
(Waley)
Fine weapons are none the less ill-omened things.
That is why, among people of good birth, in peace the left-hand side is the place of honour, but in war this is reversed and the right-hand side is the place of honour.
The Quietist, even when he conquers, does not regard weapons as lovely things.
For to think them lovely means to delight in them, and to delight in them means to delight in the slaughter of men.
And he who delights in the slaughter of men will never get what he looks for out of those that dwell under heaven.
A host that has slain men is received with grief and mourning; he that has conquered in battle is received with rites of mourning.

(Lin)
Of all things, soldiers are instruments of evil, hated by men.
Therefore the religious man (possessed of Tao) avoids them.
The gentleman favors the left in civilian life.
But on military occasions favors the right.
Soldiers are weapons of evil.
They are not the weapons of the gentleman.
When the use of soldiers cannot be helped,
The best policy is calm restraint.
Even in victory, there is no beauty.
And who calls it beautiful
Is one who delights in slaughter.
He who delights in slaughter
Will not succeed in his ambition to rule the world.
[The things of good omen favor the left.
The things of ill omen favor the right.
The lieutenant-general stands on the left.
The general stands on the right.
That is to say, it is celebrated as a Funeral Rite.]
The slaying of multitudes should be mourned with sorrow.
A victory should be celebrated with the Funeral Rite.

(Cleary)
Fine weapons are instruments of ill omen: people may despise them, so those with the Way do not dwell with them.
Therefore the place of honor for the cultured is on the left, while the honored place for the martialist is on the right.
Weapons, being instruments of ill omen, are not tools of the cultured.
Those who use them only when unavoidable.
They consider it best to be aloof; they win without beautifying it.
Those who beautify it enjoy killing people.
Those who enjoy killing cannot get their will of the world.
The left is favored for auspicious things.
The right for things of ill omen: so the subordinate general is on the left.
The general is on the right.
That means that when you are in ascendancy of power you handle it as you would a mourning.
When you have killed many people, you weep for them in sorrow.
When you win a war, you celebrate by mourning.

(Feng&English)
Good weapons are instruments of fear; all creatures hate them.
Therefore followers of Tao never use them.
The wise man prefers the left.
The man of war prefers the right.
Weapons are instruments of fear: they are not a wise man's tools.
He uses them only when he has no choice.
Peace and quiet are dear to his heart.
And victory no cause for rejoicing.
If you rejoice in victory, then you delight in killing;
If you delight in killing, you cannot fulfill yourself.
On happy occasions precedence is given to the left.
On sad occasions to the right.
In the army the general stands on the left.
The commander-in-chief on the right.
This means that war is conducted like a funeral.
When many people are being killed,
They should be mourned in heartfelt sorrow.
That is why a victory must be observed like a funeral.
(Wu)--THIRTY-TWO
Tao is always nameless.
Small as it is in its Primal Simplicity.
It is inferior to nothing in the world.
If only a ruler could cling to it.
Everything will render homage to him.
Heaven and Earth will be harmonized
And send down sweet dew.
Peace and order will reign among the people
Without any command from above.
When once the Primal Simplicity diversified.
Different names appeared.
Are there not enough names now?
Is this not the time to stop?
To know when to stop is to preserve ourselves from danger.
The Tao is to the world what a great river or an ocean is to the streams and brooks.

(Lau)
The way is for ever nameless.
Though the uncarved block is small
No one in the world dare claim its allegiance.
Should lords and princes be able to hold fast to it
The myriad creatures will submit of their own accord.
Heaven and earth will unite and sweet due will fall.
And the people will be equitable, though no one so decrees.
Only when it is cut are there names.
As soon as there are names
On ought to know it is time to stop.
Knowing when to stop one can be free from danger.
The way is to the world as the River and the Sea are to rivulets and streams.

(Chan)
Tao is eternal and has no name.
Though its simplicity seems insignificant, none in the world can master it.
If kings and barons would hold on to it, all things would submit to them spontaneously.
Heaven and earth unite to drip sweet dew.
Without the command of men, it drips evenly over all.

As soon as there were regulations and institutions, there were names (differentiation of things).
As soon as there are names, know that it is time to stop.
It is by knowing when to stop that one can be free from danger.
Analogically, Tao in the world (where everything is embraced by it), may be compared to rivers and streams running into the sea.

(Henricks)
The Tao is constantly nameless.
Though in its natural state it seems small, no one in the world dares to treat it as a subject.
Were marquises and kings able to maintain it.
The ten thousand things would submit to them on their own.
And Heaven and Earth would unite to send forth sweet dew.
By nature it would fall equally on all things, with no one among the people ordering that it be so.
As soon as we start to establish a system, we have names.
And as soon as there are set names,
Then you must also know that it's time to stop.
By knowing to stop -- in this way you'll come to no harm.
The Way's presence in the world Is like the relationship of small valley streams to rivers and seas.
(Waley)
Tao is eternal, but has no fame (name);
The Uncarved Block, though seemingly of small account,
is greater than anything that is under heaven.
If kings and barons would but possess themselves of it,
The ten thousand creatures would flock to do them homage;
Heaven-and-earth would conspire
To send Sweet Dew.
Without law or compulsion, men would dwell in harmony.
Once the block is carved, there will be names,
And so soon as there are names
Know that it is time to stop.
Only by knowing when it is time to stop can danger be avoided.
To Tao all under heaven will come
As streams and torrents flow into a great river or sea.

(Lin)
Tao is absolute and has no name.
Though the uncarved wood is small,
It cannot be employed (used as vessel) by anyone.
If kings and barons can keep
(this unspoiled nature).
The whole world shall yield them lordship of their own accord.
The Heaven and Earth join,
And the sweet rain falls.
Beyond the command of men.
Yet evenly upon all.
The human civilization arose and there were names.
Since names there were,
It were well one knew where to stop for repose.
How who knows where to stop for repose
May from danger be exempt.
Tao in the world may be compared
To rivers that run into the sea.

(Cleary)
The Way is eternally nameless.
Though simplicity is small,
the world cannot subordinate it.
If lords and monarchs can keep to it,
all beings will naturally resort to them.
Heaven and earth combine,
thus showering sweet dew.
No humans command it;
it is even by nature.
Start fashioned, and there are names;
once names also exist.
you should know when to stop.
By knowing when to stop,
you are not endangered.
The Way is to the world
as rivers and oceans to valley streams.

(Feng&English)
The Tao is forever undefined.
Small though it is in the
unformed state, it cannot be
grasped.
If kings and lords could harness
it.
The ten thousand things would
naturally obey.
Heaven and earth would come
together.
And gentle rain fell.
Men would need no more
instruction and all things would
take their course.
Once the whole is divided, the
parts need names.
There are already enough names.
One must know when to stop.
Knowing when to stop averts
troubles.
Tao in the world is like a river
flowing home to the sea.
(Wu)--THIRTY-THREE
He who knows men is clever;
He who knows himself has insight.
He who conquers men has force;
He who conquers himself is truly strong.
He who knows when he has got enough is rich.
And he who adheres assiduously to the path of Tao is a man of steady purpose.
He who stays where he has found his true home endures long.
And he who dies but perishes not enjoys real longevity.

(Lau)
He who knows other is clever;
He who knows himself has discernment.
He who overcomes others has force;
He who overcomes himself is strong.
He who knows contentment is rich;
He who perseveres is a man of purpose;
He who does not lose his station will endure;
He who lives out his days has had a long life.

(Chan)
He who knows others is wise;
He who knows himself is enlightened.
He who conquers others has physical strength.
He who conquers himself is strong.
He who is contented is rich.
He who acts with vigor has will.
He who does not lose his place (with Tao) will endure.
He who dies but does not really perish enjoys long life.

(Henricks)
To understand others is to be knowledgeable;
To understand yourself is to be wise.
To conquer others is to have strength;
To conquer yourself is to be strong.
To know when you have enough is to be rich.
To go forward with strength is to have ambition.
To not lose your place is to last long.
To die but not be forgotten -- that's true long life.
(Waley)
To understand others is to have knowledge;
To understand oneself is to be illumined.
To conquer others needs strength:
To conquer oneself is harder still.
To be content with what one has is to be rich.
He that works through violence may get his way;
But only what stays in its place can endure.
When one dies one is not lost;
there is no other longevity.

(Lin)
He who knows others is learned;
He who knows himself is wise.
He who conquers others has power of muscles;
He who conquers himself is strong.
He who is contented is rich.
He who is determined has strength of will.
He who does not lose his center endures.
He who dies yet (his power) remains has long life.

(Cleary)
Those who know others are wise;
those who know themselves are enlightened.
Those who overcome others are powerful;
those who overcome themselves are strong.
Those who are contented are rich;
those who act strongly have will.
Those who do not lose their place endure;
those who die without perishing live long.

(Feng&English)
Knowing others is wisdom:
Knowing the self is enlightenment.
Mastering others requires force;
Mastering the self needs strength.
He who knows he has enough is rich.
Perseverance is a sign of willpower.
He who stays where he is endures.
To die but not to perish is to be eternally present.
(Wu)--THIRTY-FOUR

The Great Tao is universal like a flood.
How can it be turned to the right or to the left?
All creatures depend on it.
And it denies nothing to anyone.
It does its work.
But it makes no claims for itself.
It clothes and feeds all.
But it does not lord it over them:
Thus, it may be called "the Little."
All things return to it as to their home.
But it does not lord it over them:
Thus, it may be called "the Great."
It is just because it does not wish to be great
That its greatness is fully realized.

(Lau)
The way is broad, reaching to the left as well as right.
The myriad creatures depend on it for life yet it claims no authority.
It accomplishes its task yet lays claim to no merit.
It clothes and feeds the myriad creatures yet lays no claim to being their master.
Forever free of desire, it can be called small; yet, as it lays no claim to being master when the myriad creatures turn to it, it can be called great.
It is because it never attempts itself to be great that it succeeds in becoming great.

(Chan)
The Great Tao flows everywhere.
It may go left or right.
All things depend on it for life, and it does not turn away from them.
It accomplishes its task, but does not claim credit for it.
It clothes and feeds all things but does not claim to be master over them.
Always without desires, it may be called The Small.
All things come to it and it does not master them;
It may be called The Great.
Therefore (the sage) never strives himself for the great; and thereby the great is achieved.

(Henricks)
The Way floats and drifts;
It can go left or right.
It accomplishes its tasks and completes its affairs, and yet for this it is not given a name.
The ten thousand things entrust their lives to it, and yet it does not act as their master.
Thus it is constantly without desires.
It can be named with the things that are small.
The ten thousand things entrust their lives to it, and yet it does not act as their master.
It can be named with the things that are great.
Therefore the Sage's ability to accomplish the great
Comes from his not playing the role of the great.
Therefore he is able to accomplish the great.
(Waley)
Great Tao is like a boat that drifts;
   It can go this way; it can go that.
The ten thousand creatures owe their existence to it and it does not disown them;
   Yet having produced them, it does not take possession of them.
Tao, though it covers the ten thousand things like a garment.
   Makes no claim to be master over them.
Therefore it may be called the Lowly.
The ten thousand creatures obey it,
   Though they know not that they have a master;
Therefore it is called the Great.
   So too the Sage just because he never at any time makes a show of greatness in fact achieves greatness.

(Lin)
The Great Tao flows everywhere.
   (Like a flood) it may go left or right.
The myriad things derive their life from it.
   And it does not deny them.
When its work is accomplished.
   It does not take possession.
It clothes and feeds the myriad things.
   Yet it does not claim them as its own.
Often (regarded) without mind or passion.
   It may be considered small.
Being the home of all things, yet claiming not.
   It may be considered great.
Because to the end it does not claim greatness.
   Its greatness is achieved.

(Cleary)
The Great Way is universal;
   it can apply to the left or the right.
All beings depend on it for life.
   and it does not refuse.
Its accomplishments fulfilled.
   it does not dwell on them.
It lovingly nurtures all beings.
   but does not act as their ruler.
As it has no desire, it can be called small.
   As all beings take to it,
yet it does not act as their ruler.
   it can be called great.
Therefore sages never contrive greatness;
   that is why they can become so great.

(Feng & English)
The great Tao flows everywhere,
   both to the left and to the right.
The ten thousand things depend upon it; it holds nothing back.
   It fulfills its purpose silently and makes no claim.
It nourishes the ten thousand things.
   And yet is not their lord.
It has no aim; it is very small.
   The ten thousand things return to it.
Yet it is not their lord.
   It is very great.
It does not show greatness.
   And is therefore truly great.
(Wu)--THIRTY-FIVE
He who holds the Great Symbol
will attract all things to him.
They flock to him and receive no
harm, for in him they find peace,
security and happiness.
Music and dainty dishes can only
make a passing guest pause.
But the words of Tao possess
lasting effects.
Though they are mild and
flavourless,
Though they appeal neither to the
eye nor to the ear.

(Lau)
Have in your hold the great
image
And the empire will come to you.
Coming to you and meeting with
no harm
It will be safe and sound.
Music and food
Will induce the wayfarer to stop.
The way in its passage through
the mouth is without flavour.
It cannot be seen.
It cannot be heard,
Yet it cannot be exhausted by
use.

(Chan)
Hold fast to the great form
(Tao),
And all the world will come.
They come and will encounter no
harm;
But enjoy comfort, peace, and
health.
When there are music and
dainties.
Passing strangers will stay.
But the words uttered by Tao.
How insipid and tasteless!
We look at Tao; it is
imperceptible.
We listen to it; it is inaudible.
We use it; it is inexhaustible.

(Henricks)
Hold on to the Great Image and
the whole world will come to you.
Come to you and suffer no harm;
but rather know great safety and
peace.
Music and food -- for these
passing travelers stop.
Therefore, of the Tao's speaking
we say:
Insipid, it is! It's lack of flavor.
When you look at it, it's not
sufficient to be seen.
When you listen to it, it's not
sufficient to be heard;
Yet when you use it, it can't be
used up.
(Waley)
He who holding the Great Form
goes about his work in the empire
Can go about his work, yet do no harm.
All is peace, quietness and security.
Sound of music, smell of good dishes
Will make the passing stranger pause.
How different the words that Tao gives forth!
So thin, so flavourless!
If one looks for Tao, there is nothing solid to see;
If one listens for it, there is nothing loud enough to hear.
Yet if one uses it, it is inexhaustible.

(Lin)
Hold the Great Symbol
And all the world follows.
Follows without meeting harm.
(And lives in) health, peace, commonwealth.
Offer good things to eat
And the wayfarer stays.
But Tao is mild to the taste.
Looked at, it cannot be seen;
Listened to, it cannot be heard;
Applied, its supply never fails.

(Cleary)
When holding the Great Image,
the world goes on and on without harm.
peaceful, even, tranquil.
Where there is music and dining,
passing travelers stop;
but the issue of the Way
is so plain as to be flavorless.
When you look at it, it is invisible;
when you listen to it, it is inaudible;
when you use it, it cannot be exhausted.

(Feng&English)
All men will come to him who keeps to the one.
For there lie rest and happiness and peace.
Passersby may stop for music and good food.
But a description of the Tao
Seems without substance or flavor.
It cannot be seen, it cannot be heard.
And it cannot be exhausted.
THIRTY-SIX

What is in the end to be shrunk,
Begins by being first stretched out.
What is in the end to be weakened,
Begins by being first made strong.
What is in the end to be thrown down,
Begins by being first set on high.
What is in the end to be despoiled,
Begins by being first richly endowed.
Herein is the subtle wisdom of life:
The soft and weak overcomes the hard and strong.
Just as the fish must not leave the deeps,
So the ruler must not display his weapons.

(Chan)
In order to contract,
It is necessary first to expand.
In order to weaken,
It is necessary first to strengthen.
In order to destroy,
It is necessary first to promote.
In order to grasp,
It is necessary first to give.
This is called subtle light.
The weak and the tender overcome the hard and the strong.
Fish should not be taken away from water.
And sharp weapons of the state should not be displayed to the people.

(Henricks)
If you wish to shrink it,
You must certainly stretch it.
If you wish to weaken it,
You must certainly strengthen it.
If you wish to destroy it,
You must certainly work closely with it.
If you wish to snatch something from it,
You must certainly give something to it.
This is called the Subtle Light.
The submissive and weak conquer the strong.
Fish should not be taken out of the depths;
The state's sharp weapons should not be shown to the people.
(Waley)
What is in the end to be shrunk
Must first be stretched.
Whatever is to be weakened
Must begin by being made strong.
What is to be overthrown
Must begin by being set up.
He who would be a taker
Must begin as a giver.
This is called 'dimming' one's light.
It is thus that the soft overcomes the hard.
And the weak, the strong.
'It is best to leave a fish down in his pool;
Best to leave the State's sharpest weapons where none can see them.'

(Lin)
He who is to be made to dwindle
(in power)
Must first be caused to expand.
He who is to be weakened
Must first be made strong.
He who is to be laid low
Must first be exalted to power.
He who is to be taken away from
Must first be given.
-- This is the Subtle Light.
Gentleness overcomes strength:
Fish should be left in the deep pool,
And sharp weapons of the state should be left
Where none can see them.

(Cleary)
Should you want to contain something,
you must deliberately let it expand.
Should you want to weaken something,
you must deliberately let it grow strong.
Should you want to eliminate something,
you must deliberately allow it to flourish.
Should you want to take something away,
you must deliberately grant it.
This is called subtle illumination.
Flexibility and yielding
overcome adamant coerciveness.
Fish shouldn't be taken from the depths;
the effective tools of the nation shouldn't be shown to others.

(Feng & English)
That which shrinks
Must first expand.
That which fails
Must first be strong.
That which is cast down
Must first be raised.
Before receiving
There must be giving.
This is called perception of the nature of things.
Soft and weak overcome hard and strong.
Fish cannot leave deep waters.
And a country's weapons should not be displayed.
(Wu)--THIRTY-SEVEN
Tao never makes any ado.
And yet it does everything.
If a ruler can cling to it.
All things will grow of themselves.
When they have grown and tend to make a stir.
It is time to keep them in their place by the aid of the nameless Primal Simplicity.
Which alone can curb the desires of men.
When the desires of men are curbed, there will be peace.
And the world will settle down of its own accord.

(Lau)
The way never acts yet nothing is left undone.
Should lords and princes be able to hold fast to it.
The myriad creatures will be transformed of their own accord.
After they are transformed, should desire raise its head, I shall press it down with the weight of the nameless uncarved block.
The nameless uncarved block is but freedom from desire, And if I cease to desire and remain still, The empire will be at peace of its own accord.

(Chan)
Tao invariably takes no action,
and yet there is nothing left undone.
If kings and barons can keep it all things will transform spontaneously.
If, after transformation, they should desire to be active, I would restrain them with simplicity, which has no name.
Simplicity, which has no name, is free of desires.
Being free of desires, it is tranquil.
And the world will be at peace of its own accord.

(Henricks)
The Tao is constantly nameless.
Were marquises and kings able to maintain it.
The ten thousand things would transform on their own.
Having transformed, were their desires to become active.
I would subdue them with the nameless simplicity.
Having subdued them with the nameless simplicity, I would not disgrace them.
By not being disgraced, they will be tranquil.
And Heaven and Earth will of themselves be correct and right.
(Waley)
Tao never does;
Yet through it all things are done.
If the barons and kings would
but possess themselves of it.
The ten thousand creatures
would at once be transformed.
And if having been transformed
they should desire to act.
We must restrain them by the
blankness of the Unnamed.
The blankness of the Unnamed
Brings dispassion;
To be dispassionate is to be still.
And so, of itself, the whole
empire will be at rest.

(Lin)
The Tao never does.
Yet through it everything is done.
If kings and barons can keep the
Tao,
The world will of its own accord
be reformed.
When reformed and rising to
action.
Let it be restrained by the
Nameless pristine simplicity.
The Nameless pristine simplicity
Is stripped of desire (for
contention).
By stripping of desire quiescence
is achieved.
And the world arrives at peace of
its own accord.

(Cleary)
The Way is always unconstrained,
yet there is nothing it doesn’t do.
If lords and monarchs could keep
to it,
all beings would evolve
spontaneously.
When they have evolved and
want to act,
I would stabilize them with the
nameless simplicity.
Even nameless simplicity would
not be wanted.
By not wanting, there is calm,
and the world will straighten
itself.

(Feng&English)
Tao abides in non-action.
Yet nothing is left undone.
If kings and lords observed this.
The ten thousand things would
develop naturally.
If they still desire to act. They
would return to the simplicity of
formless substance.
Without form there is no desire.
Without desire there is
tranquillity.
And in this way all things would
be at peace.
High Virtue is non-virtuous; Therefore it has Virtue.
Low Virtue never frees itself from virtuousness; 
Therefore it has no Virtue.
High Virtue makes no fuss and has no private ends to serve; 
Low Virtue not only fusses but has private ends to serve.
High humanity fusses but has no private ends to serve.
High morality not only fusses but has private ends to serve.
High ceremony fusses but finds no response;
Then it tries to enforce itself with rolled-up sleeves.
Failing Tao, man resorts to Virtue.
Failing Virtue, man resorts to humanity.
Failing humanity, man resorts to morality.
Failing morality, man resorts to ceremony.
Now, ceremony is the merest husk of faith and loyalty; 
It is the beginning of all confusion and disorder.
As to foreknowledge, it is only the flower of Tao.
And the beginning of folly.
Therefore, the full-grown man sets his heart upon the substance 
rather than the husk:
Upon the fruit rather than the flower.
Truly, he prefers what is within to what is without.

A man of the highest virtue does not keep to virtue and that is why he has virtue.
A man of the lowest virtue never strays from virtue and that is why he is without virtue.
The former never acts yet leaves nothing undone.
The latter acts but there are things left undone.
A man of the highest benevolence acts, but from no ulterior motive.
A man of the highest rectitude acts but from ulterior motive.
A man most conversant in the rites acts, but when no one responds rolls up his sleeves and resorts to persuasion by force.
Hence when the way was lost there was virtue;
when virtue was lost there was benevolence;
when benevolence was lost there was rectitude;
when rectitude was lost there were the rites.
The rites are the wearing thin of loyalty and good faith
And the beginning of disorder; 
Foreknowledge is the flowery embellishment of the way
And the beginning of folly.
Hence a man of large mind abides in the thick not in the thin,
in the fruit and not in the flower.
Therefore he discards the one and takes the other.

The man of superior virtue is not conscious of his virtue,
And in this way he really possesses virtue.
The man of inferior virtue never loses (sight of) his virtue.
And in this way he loses his virtue.
The man of superior virtue takes no action, but has no ulterior motive to do so.
The man of inferior virtue takes action, and has an ulterior motive to do so.
The man of superior humanity takes action, but has no ulterior motive to do so.
The man of superior righteousness takes action, and has an ulterior motive to do so.
The man of superior propriety takes action, and when people do not respond to it, he will stretch his arms and force it on them.
Therefore, only when Tao is lost does the doctrine of virtue arise.
When virtue is lost, only then does the doctrine of humanity arise.
When humanity is lost, only then does the doctrine of righteousness arise.
When righteousness is lost, only then does the doctrine of propriety arise.
Now, propriety is a superficial expression of loyalty and faithfulness, and the beginning of disorder.
Those who are the first to know have the flowers (appearance) of Tao but are the beginning of ignorance.
For this reason the great man dwells in the thick (substantial), and does not rest with the thin (superficial).
He dwells in the fruit (reality), and does not rest with the flower (appearance).
Therefore he rejects the one, and accepts the other.

The highest virtue is not virtuous: 
therefor it truly has virtue.
The lowest virtue never loses sight of its virtue: therefore it has no true virtue.
The highest virtue takes no action, yet it has no reason for acting this way:
The highest humanity takes action, yet it has no reason for acting this way.
The highest righteousness takes action, and it has its reasons for acting this way:
The highest propriety takes action, and when no one responds to it, then it angrily rolls up its sleeves and forces people to comply.
Therefore, when the Way is lost, only then do we have virtue:
When virtue is lost, only then do we have humanity:
When humanity is lost, only then do we have righteousness:
And when righteousness is lost, only then do we have propriety.
As for propriety, it's but the thin edge of loyalty and sincerity, and the beginning of disorder.
And foreknowledge is but the flower of the Way, and the beginning of stupidity.
Therefore the Great Man
Dwells in the thick an doesn't dwell in the thin:
Dwells in the fruit and doesn't dwell in the flower.
Therefore, he rejects that and takes this.
(Waley)
The man of highest ‘power’ does not reveal himself as a possessor of ‘power’.
Therefore he keeps his ‘power’.
The man of inferior ‘power’ cannot rid it of the appearance of ‘power’.
Therefore he is in truth without ‘power’.
The man of highest ‘power’ neither acts nor is there any who so regards him;
The man of inferior ‘power’ both acts and is so regarded.
The man of highest humanity, though he acts, is not so regarded;
Whereas a man of even the highest morality both acts and is so regarded.
While even he who is best versed in ritual not merely acts, but if people fail to respond then he will pull up his sleeves and advance upon them.
That is why it is said: “After Tao was lost, then came the ‘power’;
After the ‘power’ was lost, then came human kindness.
After human kindness was lost, then came morality,
After morality was lost, then came ritual.
Now ritual is the mere husk of loyalty and promisekeeping
And is indeed the first step towards brawling.”
Foreknowledge may be the ‘flower of doctrine’,
But it is the beginning of folly.
Therefore the full-grown man takes his stand upon the solid substance and not upon the mere husk,
Upon the fruit and not upon the flower.
‘Truly, he rejects that and takes this’.

(Lin)
The man of superior virtue is not (conscious of his) virtue.
Hence he is virtuous.
The man of inferior virtue (is intent on) not losing virtue.
Hence he is devoid of virtue.
The man of superior virtue never acts, nor ever (does so) with an ulterior motive.
The man of inferior virtue acts, and (does so) with an ulterior motive.
The man of superior kindness acts, but (does so) without an ulterior motive.
The man of superior justice acts, and (does so) with an ulterior motive.
(But when) the man of superior li acts and finds no response,
He rolls up his sleeves to force it on others.
Therefore:
After Tao is lost, then (arises the doctrine of) kindness,
After kindness is lost, then (arises the doctrine of) justice.
After justice is lost, then (arises the doctrine of) li.
Now li is the thinning out of loyalty and honesty of heart.
And the beginning of chaos.
The prophets are the flowing of Tao.
And the origin of folly.
Therefore the noble man dwells in the heavy (base),
And not in the thinning (end).
He dwells in the fruit.
And not in the flowering (expression).
Therefore he rejects the one and accepts the other.

(Cleary)
Higher virtue is not ingratiating;
that is why it has virtue.
Lower virtue does not forget about reward;
that is why it is virtueless.
Higher virtue is uncontrived.
and there is no way to contrive it.
Lower virtue is created.
and there is a way to do it.
Higher humanity is created.
but there is no way to contrive it.
Higher duty is done.
and there is a way to do it.
Higher courtesy is done.
but no one responds to it;
so there is forceful repetition.
Therefore virtue comes after loss of the Way;
humanity comes after loss of virtue;
duty comes after loss of humanity;
courtesy comes after loss of duty.
Manners mean loyalty and trust are thin,
and disarray’s beginning.
Foresight is a flower of the Way,
and the beginning of confusion too.
Therefore great people dwell in the thick,
not the thin.
They abide in the substance,
not the flower.
So they leave the latter and take the former.

(Feng&English)
A truly good man is not aware of his goodness.
And is therefore good.
A foolish man tries to be good.
And is therefore not good.
A truly good man does nothing.
Yet leaves nothing undone.
A foolish man is always doing.
Yet much remains to be done.
When a truly kind man does something, he leaves nothing undone.
When a just man does something, he leaves a great deal to be done.
When a disciplinarian does something and no one responds.
He rolls up his sleeves in an attempt to enforce order.
Therefore when Tao is lost, there is goodness.
When goodness is lost, there is kindness.
When kindness is lost, there is justice.
When justice is lost, there is ritual.
Now ritual is the husk of faith and loyalty, the beginning of confusion.
Knowledge of the future is only a flowery trapping of Tao.
It is the beginning of folly.
Therefore the truly great man dwells on what is real and not what is on the surface.
Not the fruit and not the flower.
Therefore accept the one and reject the other.
(Lau) Of old, these came to be in possession of the One: Heaven in virtue of the One is limpid; Earth in virtue of the One is settled; Gods in virtue of the One have their potencies; The valley in virtue of the One is full; The myriad creatures in virtue of the One are alive; Lords and princes in virtue of the One become leaders in the empire. It is the One that makes these what they are. Without what makes it limpid heaven might spill; Without what makes it settled earth might sink; Without what gives them their potencies gods might spend themselves; Without what makes it full the valley might run dry; Without what keeps them alive the myriad creatures might perish; Without what makes them leaders lords and princes might fall. Hence the superior must have the inferior as root; the high must have the low as base. Thus lords and princes refer to themselves as 'solitary', 'desolate', and 'hapless'.

This is taking the inferior as root, is it not? Hence the highest renown is without renown, Not wishing to be one among many like jade Nor to be aloof like stone.

(Chan) Of old those that obtained the One: Heaven obtained the One and became clear. Earth obtained the One and became tranquil. The spiritual beings obtained the One and became divine. The valley obtained the One and became full. The myriad things obtained the One and lived and grew. Kings and barons obtained the One and became rulers of the empire. What made them so is the One. If heaven had not thus become clear, it would crack. If the earth had not thus become tranquil, it would soon be shaken. If the spiritual beings had not thus become divine, they would soon wither away. If the valley had not thus become full, it would soon be exhausted. If the myriad things had not thus lived and grown, they would soon become extinct. If kings and barons had not thus become honorable and high in position, they would soon fall. Therefore humble station is the basis of honor. The low is the foundation of the high.

For this reason kings and barons call themselves the orphaned, the lonely ones, the unworthy. Is this not regarding humble station as the basis of honor? Is it not? Therefore enumerate all the parts of a chariot as you may, and you still have no chariot. Rather than jingle like jade, Rumble like the rocks.

(Henricks) Of those in the past that attained the One -- Heaven, by attaining the One became clear; Earth, by attaining the One became stable; Gods, by attaining the One became divine; Valleys, by attaining the One became full; Marquises and kings, by attaining the One made the whole land ordered and secure. Taking this to its logical conclusion we would say --

If heaven were not by means of it clear, it would, I'm afraid, shatter.
If the Earth were not by means of it stable, it would, I'm afraid, let go.
If the gods were not by means of it divine, they would, I'm afraid, wither.
If valleys were not by means of it full, they would, I'm afraid, dry up.
And if marquises and kings were not by means of it noble and high, they would, I'm afraid, topple and fall.

Therefore, it must be the case that the noble has the base as its root. And it must be the case that the high has the low for its foundation. Thus, for this reason, marquises and kings call themselves "The Orphan," "The Widower," and "The One Without Grain." Therefore, they regard their large number of carriages as having no carriage. And because they desire not to dazzle and glitter like jade. But to remain firm and strong like stone.
(Waley)
As for the things that from of old
have understood the Whole --
The sky through such
understanding remains limpid.
Earth remains steady.
The spirits keep their holiness.
The abyss is replenished.
The ten thousand creatures bear
their kind.
Barons and princes direct their
people.
It is the whole that causes it.
Were it not so limpid, the sky
would soon get torn.
Were it not for its steadiness, the
earth would soon tip over.
Were it not for their holiness, the
spirits would soon wither away.
Were it not for this replenishment,
the abyss would go dry.
Were it not that the ten thousand
creatures can bear their kind, they
would soon become extinct.
Were the barons and princes no
longer directors of people and for
that reason honoured and exalted,
they would soon be overthrown.
Truly the 'humble is the stem upon
which the mighty grows,
The low is the foundation upon
which the high is laid.'
That is why barons and princes
refer to themselves as 'The Orphan',
'The Needy', 'The Ill-provided'.
Is this not indeed a case of might
rooting itself upon humility?
True indeed are the sayings:
'Enumerate the parts of a carriage,
and you still have not explained what
a carriage is', and
'They did not want to tinkle like
jade bells, while others resounded
like stone-chimes.'

(Lin)
There were those in ancient times
possessed of the One:
Through possession of the One, the
Heaven was clarified.
Through possession of the One, the
Earth was stabilized.
Through possession of the One, the
gods were spiritualized.
Through possession of the One, the
valleys were made full.
Through possession of the One, all
things lived and grew.
Through possession of the One, the
princes and dukes became the
ennobled of the people.
-- That was how each became so.
Without clarity, the Heavens might
shake.
Without stability, the Earth might
quake.
Without spiritual power, the gods
might crumble.
Without being filled, the valley
might crack.
Without the life giving power, all
things might perish.
Without the ennobling power, the
kings and barons might stumble and
fall.
Therefore the nobility depend upon
the common man for support.
And the excited ones depend upon
the lowly for their base.
That is why the princes and dukes
call themselves "the orphaned", "the
lonely one", "the unworthy".
Is it not true then that they depend
upon the common man for support?
Truly, take down the parts of a
chariot, and there is no chariot (left).
Rather than jingle like jade.
Rumble like the rocks.

(Cleary)
When unity was attained of old,
heaven became clear by attaining
unity,
earth became steady by attaining
unity,
spirit was quickened by attaining
unity,
valley streams were filled by
attaining unity,
all beings were born by attaining
unity;
and by attaining unity lords acted
rightly for the sake of the world.
What brought about this was
unity:
without means of clarity, heaven
may burst;
without means of steadiness,
earth may erupt;
without means of quickening,
spirit may be exhausted;
without means of filling, valley
streams may dry up;
without means of birth, all beings
may perish;
without means of acting rightly,
lords may stumble.
Therefore nobility is rooted in
humility,
lowliness is based on lowliness.
This is why noble people refer to
themselves as alone, lacking, and
unworthy.
Is this not being rooted in
humility?
So there is no praise in repeated
praise;
they don't want to be like jewels
of like stones.

(Feng&English)
These things from ancient times
arise from one:
The sky is whole and clear.
The earth is whole and firm.
The spirit is whole and strong.
The valley is whole and full.
The ten thousand things are
whole and alive.
Kings and lords are whole, and
the country is upright.
All these are in virtue of
wholeness.
The clarity of the sky prevents its
falling.
The firmness of the earth
prevents its splitting.
The strength of the spirit
prevents its being used up.
The fullness of the valley
prevents its running dry.
The growth of the ten thousand
things prevents their dying out.
The leadership of kings and lords
prevents the downfall of the
country.
Therefore the humble is the root
of the noble.
The low is the foundation of the
high.
Princes and lords consider
themselves "orphand", "widowed", and "worthless".
Do they not depend on being
humble?
Too much success is not an
advantage.
Do not tinkle like jade
Or clatter like stone chimes.
(Wu)--FORTY
The movement of the Tao consists in Returning.
The use of the Tao consists in softness.
All things under heaven are born of the corporeal;
The corporeal is born of the Incorporeal.

(Lau)
Turning back is how the Way moves;
Weakness is the means the way employs.
The myriad creatures in the world are born from Something,
and Something from Nothing.

(Chan)
Reversion is the action of Tao.
Weakness is the function of Tao.
All things in the world come from being.
And being comes from non-being.

(Henricks)
"Reversion" is the movement of the Tao;
"Weakness" is the function of the Tao.
The things of the world originate in being,
And being originates in nonbeing.
(Waley)
In Tao the only motion is returning;
The only useful quality, weakness.
For though all creatures under heaven are the products of Being,
Being itself is the product of Non-being.

(Lin)
Reversion is the action of Tao.
Gentleness is the function of Tao.
The things of this world come from Being.
And Being (comes) from Non-being.

(Cleary)
Return is the movement of the Way;
yielding is the function of the Way.
All things in the world are born of being;
being is born of nonbeing.

(Feng & English)
Returning is the motion of the Tao.
Yielding is the way of the Tao.
The ten thousand things are born of being.
Being is born of not being.
When a wise scholar hears the Tao,
He practices it diligently.
When a mediocre scholar hears the Tao,
He wavers between belief and unbelief.
When a worthless scholar hears the Tao,
He laughs boisterously at it.
But if such a one does not laugh at it,
The Tao would not be the Tao!
The wise men of old have truly said:
The bright Way looks dim.
The progressive Way looks retrograde.
The smooth Way looks rugged.
High Virtue looks like an abyss.
Great whiteness looks spotted.
Abundant Virtue looks deficient.
Established Virtue looks shabby.
Solid Virtue looks as though melted.
Great squareness has no corners.
Great talents ripen late.
Great sound is silent.
Great Form is shapeless.
The Tao is hidden and nameless;
Yet it alone knows how to render help and to fulfill.

When the best student hears about the way
He practices it assiduously;
When the average student hears about the way
It seems to him one moment there
And gone the next;
When the worst student hears about the way
He laughs out loud.
If he did not laugh
It would be unworthy of being the way.
Hence the Chien yen has it:
The way that is bright seems dull;
The way that leads forward seems to lead backward;
The way that is even seems rough.
The highest virtue is like the valley;
The sheerest whiteness seems sullied;
Ample virtue seems defective;
Vigorous virtue seems indolent;
Plain virtue seems soiled;
The great square has no corners.
The great vessel takes long to complete;
The great note is rarefied in sound;
The great image has no shape.
The way conceals itself in being nameless.
It is the way alone that excels in bestowing and in accomplishing.

When the highest type of men hear Tao.
They diligently practice it.
When the average type of men hear Tao.
They half believe in it.
When the lowest type of men hear Tao.
They laugh heartily at it.
If they did not laugh at it, it would not be Tao.
Therefore there is the established saying:
The Tao which is bright appears dark.
The Tao which goes forward appears to fall backward.
The Tao which is level appears uneven.
Great virtue appears like a valley (hollow).
Great purity appears like disgrace.
Far-reaching virtue appears as if insufficient.
Solid virtue appears as if unsteady.
True substance appears to be changeable.
The great square has no corners.
The great implement (or talent) is slow to finish (or nature).
Great music sounds faint.
Great form has no shape.
The Tao is hidden and nameless.
Yet it is Tao alone that skilfully provides for all and brings them to perfection.

When the highest type of men hear the Way, with diligence they're able to practice it;
When average men hear the Way, some things they retain and others they lose;
When the lowest of men hear the Way, they laugh out loud at it.
If they didn't laugh at it, it couldn't be regarded as the Way.
Therefore, there is a set saying about this that goes:
The bright Way appears to be dark;
The Way that goes forward appears to retreat;
The smooth Way appears uneven;
The highest virtue is empty like a valley;
The purest white appears to be soiled;
Vast virtue appears to be insufficient;
Firm virtue appears thin and weak;
The simplest reality appears to change.
The Great Square has no corners;
The Great Vessel takes long to complete;
The Great Tone makes little sound;
The Great Image has no shape.
The Way is Great but has no name.
Only the Way is good at beginning things and also good at bringing things to completion.
(Lin)  
When the highest type of men hear the Tao,  
They practice it diligently.  
When the mediocre type hear the Tao,  
They seem to be aware and yet unaware of it.  
When the lowest type hear the Tao,  
They break into loud laughter —  
If it were not laughed at, it would not be the Tao.  
Therefore there is the established saying:  
"Who understands Tao seems dull of comprehension;  
Who is advanced in Tao seems to slip backwards;  
Who moves on the even Tao seems to go up and down."  
Superior virtue appears like a hollow (valley);  
Sheer white appears like tarnished;  
Great character appears like insufficient;  
Solid character appears like inform;  
Pure worth appears like contaminated.  
Great space has no corners;  
Great talent takes long to mature;  
Great music is faintly heard;  
Great Form has no contour;  
And Tao is hidden without a name.  
It is this Tao that is adept at lending (its power) and bringing fulfillment.

(Waley)  
When the man of highest capacities hears Tao  
He does his best to put it into practice.  
When the man of middling capacity hears Tao  
He is in two minds about it.  
When the man of low capacity hears Tao  
He laughs loudly at it.  
If he did not laugh, it would not be worth the name of Tao.  
Therefore the proverb has it:  
'The way out into the light often looks dark,  
The way that goes ahead often looks as if it went back.'  
The way that is least hilly often looks as if it went up and down.  
The 'power' that is really loftiest looks like an abyss,  
What is sheerest white looks blurred.  
The 'power' that is most sufficing looks inadequate,  
The 'power' that stands firmest looks flimsy.  
'What is in its nature, pure state looks faded:  
The largest square has no corners,  
The greatest vessel takes the longest to finish.  
Great music has the faintest notes.  
The Great Form is without shape.  
For Tao is hidden and nameless.  
Yet Tao alone supports all things and brings them to fulfillment.

(Cleary)  
When superior people hear of the Way,  
they carry it out with diligence.  
When middling people hear of the Way,  
it sometimes seems to be there, sometimes not.  
When lesser people hear of the Way,  
they ridicule it greatly.  
If they didn't laugh at it, it wouldn't be the Way.  
So there are constructive sayings on this:  
The Way of illumination seems dark,  
the Way of advancement seems retiring,  
the Way of equality seems to categorize;  
higher virtue seems empty, great purity seems ignominious,  
broad virtue seems insufficient, constructive virtue seems careless,  
Simple honesty seems changeable,  
great range has no boundaries, great vessels are finished late;  
the great sound has a rarefied tone,  
the great image has no form, the Way hides its namelessness.  
Only the Way can enhance and perfect.

(Feng&English)  
The wise student hears of the Tao and practices it diligently.  
The average student hears of the Tao and gives it thought now and again.  
The foolish student hears of the Tao and laughs aloud.  
If there were no laughter, the Tao would not be what it is.  
Hence it is said:  
The bright path seems dim:  
Going forward seems like retreat:  
The easy way seems hard:  
The highest Virtue seems empty:  
Great purity seems sullied:  
A wealth of Virtue seems inadequate:  
The strength of Virtue seems frail:  
Real Virtue seems unreal:  
The perfect square has no corners:  
Great talents ripen late:  
The highest notes are hard to hear:  
The greatest form has no shape.  
The Tao is hidden and without name.  
The Tao alone nourishes and brings everything to fulfillment.
Wu--FORTY-TWO

Tao gave birth to One.
One gave birth to Two.
Two gave birth to Three.
Three gave birth to all the myriad things.

All the myriad things carry the Yin on their backs and hold the Yang in their embrace.

Deriving their vital harmony from the proper blending of the two vital Breaths.

What is more loathed by men than to be "helpless," "little," and "worthless"?

And yet these are the very names the princes and barons call themselves.

Truly, one may gain by losing; and one may lose by gaining.

What another has taught let me repeat:

"A man of violence will come to a violent end."

Whoever said this can be my teacher and my father.

Lau

The way begets one;
one begets two;
two begets three;
three begets the myriad creatures.
The myriad creatures carry on their backs the Yin and embrace in their arms the Yang and are the blending of the generative forces of the two.

There are no words which men detest more than 'solitary', 'desolate', and 'helpless'; yet lords and princes use these to refer to themselves.

Thus a thing is sometimes added to by being diminished and diminished by being added to.

What others have taught, I teach also:

"Violent and fierce people do not die a natural death."

I shall make this the father (basis or starting point) of my teaching.

Chan

Tao produced the One.
The One produced the two.
The two produced the three.

And the three produced the ten thousand things.

The ten thousand things carry the Yin and embrace the Yang,

and through the blending of the material force (chi) they achieve harmony.

People hate to be orphaned, the lonely ones, and the unworthy.

And yet kings and lords call themselves by these names.

Therefore it is often the case that things gain by losing and lose by gaining.

What others have taught, I teach also:

"Violent and fierce people do not die a natural death."

I shall make this the father (basis or starting point) of my teaching.

Henricks

The Way gave birth to the One;
The One gave birth to the Two;
The Two gave birth to the Three;
And the Three gave birth to the ten thousand things.

The ten thousand things carry Yin on their backs and wrap their arms around Yang.

Through the blending of chi they arrive at a state of harmony.

The things that are hated by the whole world

Are to be orphaned, widowed, and have no grain.

Yet kings and dukes take these as their names.

Thus with all things -- some are increased by taking away;

While some are diminished by adding on.

Therefore, what other men teach.

I will also consider and then teach to others.

Thus, "The strong and violent do not come to a natural end."

I will make this the father (basis or starting point) of my teaching.
(Waley)
Tao gave birth to the One:
the One gave birth successively
to two things, three things, up to
ten thousand.
These ten thousand creatures
cannot turn their back to the shade
without having the sun on their
bellies.
and it is on this blending of the
breaths that their harmony
depends.
To be orphaned, needy, ill-
provided is what men most hate;
yet princes and dukes style
themselves so.
Truly, 'things are often increased
by seeking to diminish them and
diminished by seeking to increase
them.'
The maxims that others use in
their teaching I too will use in mine.
Show me a man of violence that
came to a good end, and I will take
him for my teacher.

(Lin)
Out of Tao, One is born:
Out of One, Two;
Out of Two, Three;
Out of Three, the created
universe.
The created universe carries the
yin at its back and the yang in
front:
Through the union of the
pervading principles it reaches
harmony.
To be "orphaned," "lonely" and
"unworthy" is what men hate most.
Yet the kings and dukes call
themselves by such names.
For sometimes things are
benefited by being taken away
from.
And suffer be being added to.
Others have taught this maxim.
Which I shall teach also:
"The violent man shall die a
violent death."
This I shall regard as my
spiritual teacher.

(Cleary)
The Way produces one:
one produces two.
two produces three.
three produces all beings:
all beings bear yin and embrace
yang.
with a mellowing energy for
harmony.
The things people dislike
are only to be alone, lacking, and
unworthy;
yet these are what monarchs call
themselves.
Therefore people may gain from
loss,
and may lose from gain.
What others teach, I also teach.
The strong cannot master their
death:
I take this to be the father of
teachings.

(Feng&English)
The Tao begot one.
One begot two.
Two begot three.
And three begot the ten thousand
things.
The ten thousand things carry yin
and embrace yang.
They achieve harmony by
combining these forces.
Men hate to be "orphaned,"
"widowed," or "worthless."
But this is how kings and lords
describe themselves.
For one gains by losing
And loses by gaining.
What others teach, I also teach:
that is:
"A violent man will die a violent
death!"
This will be the essence of my
teaching.
(Wu)--FORTY-THREE

The softest of all things
Overrides the hardest of all things.

Only Nothing can enter into no-space.
Hence I know the advantages of Non-Ado.

Few things under heaven are as instructive as the lessons of Silence.
Or as beneficial as the fruits of Non-Ado.

(Lau)

The most submissive thing in the world can ride roughshod over the hardest things in the world --
that which is without substance entering that which has no crevices.
That is why I know the benefit of resorting to no action.
The Teaching that uses no words,
the benefit of resorting to no action,
these are beyond understanding of all but a very few in the world.

(Chan)

The softest things in the world overcome the hardest things in the world.
Non-being penetrates that in which there is no space.
Through this I know the advantage of taking no action.
Few in this world can understand teaching without words
and the advantage of taking no action.

(Henricks)

The softest, most pliable thing in the world runs roughshod over the firmest thing in the world.
That which has no substance gets into that which has no space or cracks.
I therefore know that there is benefit in taking no action.
The wordless teaching, the benefit of taking no action --
Few in the world can realize these!
(Waley)
What is of all things most yielding (water)
Can overwhelm that which is of all things most hard (rock).
Being substanceless it can enter even where there is no space;
That is how I know the value of action that is actionless.
But that there can be teaching without words,
Value in action that is actionless.
Few indeed can understand.

(Lin)
The softest substance of the world
Goes through the hardest.
That-which-is-without-form penetrates that-which-has-no-
crevice;
Through this I know the benefit of taking no action.
The teaching without words
And the benefit of taking no action
Are without compare in the universe.

(Cleary)
What is softest in the world drives what is hardest in the world.
Nonbeing enters where there is no room;
that is how we know noncontrivance enhances.
Unspoken guidance and uncontrived enhancement are reached by few in the world.

(Feng & English)
The softest thing in the universe
Overcomes the hardest thing in the universe.
That without substance can enter where there is no room.
Hence I know the value of non-action.
Teaching without words and work without doing
Are understood by few.
(Wu)—FORTY-FOUR
As for your name and your body,
which is the dearer?
As for your body and your
wealth, which is the more prized?
As for gain and loss, which is the
more painful?
Thus, an excessive love for
anything will cost you dear in the
end.
The storing up of too much
goods will entail a heavy loss.
To know when you have enough
is to be immune from disgrace.
To know when to stop is to be
preserved from perils.
Only thus can you endure long.

(Lau)
Your name or your person,
Which is dearer?
Your person or your goods,
Which is worth more?
Gain or loss,
Which is a greater bane?
That is why excessive meanness
is sure to lead to great expense;
Too much store
is sure to end in immense loss.
Know contentment
And you will suffer no disgrace;
Know when to stop
And you will meet no danger.
You can then endure.

(Chan)
Which does one love more, fame
or one’s own life?
Which is more valuable, one’s
own life or wealth?
Which is worse, gain or loss?
Therefore he who has lavish
desires will spend extravagantly.
He who hoards most will lose
heavily.
He who is contented suffers no
disgrace.
He who knows when to stop is
free from danger.
Therefore he can endure long.

(Henricks)
Fame or health -- which is more
dear?
Your health or possessions --
which is worth more?
Gain or loss -- in which is there
harm?
If your desires are great, you’re
bound to be extravagant;
If you store much away, you’re
bound to lose a great deal.
Therefore, if you know
contentment, you’ll not be
disgraced.
If you know when to stop, you’ll
suffer no harm.
And in this way you can last a
very long time.
(Waley)
Fame or one's own self. which matters to one most?
One's own self or things bought, which should count most?
In the getting or the losing, which is worse?
Hence he who grudges expense pays dearest in the end:
He who has hoarded most will suffer the heaviest loss.
Be content with what you have and are, and no one can despoil you:
Who stops in time nothing can harm.
He is forever safe and secure.

(Lin)
Fame or one's own self. which does one love more?
One's own self or material goods, which has more worth?
Loss (of self) or possession (of goods), which is the greater evil?
Therefore he who loves most spends most.
He who hoards much loses much.
The contented man meet no disgrace:
Who knows when to stop runs into no danger --
He can long endure.

(Cleary)
Which is closer, your name or your body?
Which is more, your body or your possessions?
Which is more destructive, gain or loss?
Extreme fondness means great expense,
and abundant possessions mean a great loss.
If you know when you have enough,
you will not be disgraced.
If you know when to stop,
you will not be endangered.
It is possible thereby to live long.

(Feng&English)
Fame or self: which matters more?
Self or wealth: Which is more precious?
Gain or loss: Which is more painful?
He who is attached to things will suffer much.
He who saves will suffer heavy loss.
A contented man is never disappointed.
He who knows when to stop does not find himself in trouble.
He will stay forever safe.
(Wu)--FORTY-FIVE

The greatest perfection seems imperfect.
And yet its use is inexhaustible.
The greatest fullness seems empty.
And yet its use is endless.
The greatest straightness looks like crookedness.
The greatest skill appears clumsy.
The greatest eloquence sounds like stammering.
Restlessness overcomes cold,
But calm overcomes heat.
The peaceful and serene
Is the Norm of the World.

(Lau)
Great perfection seems chipped,
Yet use will not wear it out;
Great fullness seems empty,
Yet use will not drain it;
Great straightness seems bent;
Great skill seems awkward;
Great eloquence seems tongue-tied.
Restlessness overcomes cold;
stillness overcomes heat.
Limpid and still,
One can be a leader in the empire.

(Chan)
What is most perfect seems to be incomplete;
But its utility is unimpaired.
What is most full seems to be empty;
But its usefulness is inexhaustible.
What is most straight seems to be crooked.
The greatest skill seems to be clumsy.
The greatest eloquence seems to stutter.
Hasty movement overcomes cold,
(But) tranquillity overcomes heat.
By being greatly tranquil,
One is qualified to be the ruler of the world.

(Henricks)
Great completion seems incomplete;
Yet its usefulness is never exhausted.
Great fullness seems to be empty;
Yet its usefulness is never used up.
Great straightness seems to be bent.
Great skill seems to be clumsy.
Great eloquence seems to stammer;
Great surplus seems to be lacking.
Activity overcomes cold;
Tranquillity overcomes heat.
If you're quiet and tranquil you
can become the ruler of the world.
(Waley)  
What is most perfect seems to have something missing;  
Yet its use is unimpaired.  
What is most full seems empty;  
Yet its use will never fail.  
What is most straight seems crooked:  
The greatest skill seems like clumsiness.  
The greatest eloquence like stuttering.  
Movement overcomes cold;  
But staying still overcomes heat.  
So he by his limpid calm  
Puts right everything under heaven.

(Lin)  
The highest perfection is like imperfection.  
And its use is never impaired.  
The greatest abundance seems meager.  
And its use will never fail.  
What is most straight appears devious:  
The greatest cleverness appears like stupidity;  
The greatest eloquence seems like stuttering.  
Movement overcomes cold.  
(But) keeping still overcomes heat.  
Who is calm and quiet becomes the guide for the universe.

(Cleary)  
Great completeness seems incomplete;  
its use is never exhausted.  
Great fullness seems empty;  
its use is never ended.  
Great directness seems restrained.  
great skill seems inept.  
great eloquence seems inarticulate.  
Movement overcomes cold,  
stillness overcomes heat.  
Clear stillness is right for the world.

(Feng & English)  
Great accomplishment seems imperfect,  
Yet it does not outlive its usefulness.  
Great fullness seems empty.  
Yet it cannot be exhausted.  
Great straightness seems twisted.  
Great intelligence seems stupid.  
Great eloquence seems awkward.  
Movement overcomes cold.  
Stillness overcomes heat.  
Stillness and tranquillity set things in order in the universe.
(Wu)-FORTY-SIX
When the world is in possession of the Tao.
The galloping horses are led to fertilize the fields with their droppings.
When the world has become Taoless.
War horses breed themselves on the suburbs.
There is no calamity like not knowing what is enough.
There is no evil like covetousness.
Only he who knows what is enough will always have enough.

(Lau)
When the way prevails in the empire, fleet-footed horses are relegated to ploughing the fields;
when the way does not prevail in the empire, war-horses breed on the border.
There is no crime greater than having too many desires;
There is no disaster greater than not being content;
There is no misfortune greater than being covetous.
Hence in being content, one will always have enough.

(Chan)
When Tao prevails in the world, galloping horses are turned back to fertilize (the fields with their dung).
When Tao does not prevail in the world, war horses thrive in the suburbs.
There is no calamity greater than lavish desires.
There is no greater guilt than discontentment.
And there is no greater disaster than greed.
He who is contented with contentment is always contented.

(Henricks)
When the world has the Way, ambling horses are retired to fertilize fields.
When the world lacks the Way, war horses are reared in the suburbs.
Of crimes -- none is greater than having things that one desires;
Of disasters -- none is greater than not knowing when one has enough.
Of defects -- none brings more sorrow than the desire to attain.
Therefore, the contentment one has when he knows that he has enough, is abiding contentment indeed.
(Waley)
When there is Tao in the empire
The galloping steeds are turned back to fertilize the ground with their droppings.
When there is not Tao in the empire
War horses will be reared even on the sacred mounds below city walls.
No lure is greater than to possess what others want.
No disaster greater than not to be content with what one has.
No presage of evil greater than that men should be wanting to get more.
Truly: He who has once known the contentment that comes simply through being content, will never again be otherwise than contented.

(Lin)
When the world lives in accord with Tao.
Racing horses are turned back to haul refuse carts.
When the world lives not in accord with Tao,
Cavalry abounds in the countryside.
There is no greater curse than the lack of contentment.
No greater sin than the desire for possession.
Therefore he who is contented with contentment shall always be content.

(Cleary)
When the world has the Way, running horses are retired to till the fields.
When the world lacks the Way, war-horses are bred in the countryside.
No crime is greater than approving of greed;
no calamity is greater than discontent.
No fault is greater than possessiveness.
So the satisfaction of contentment is always enough.

(Feng & English)
When the Tao is present in the universe.
The horses haul manure.
When the Tao is absent from the universe.
War horses are bred outside the city.
There is no greater sin than desire.
No greater curse than discontent.
No greater misfortune than wanting something for oneself.
Therefore he who knows that enough is enough will always have enough.
(Wu)--FORTY-SEVEN
Without going out of your door,
You can know the ways of the world.
Without peeping through your window,
You can see the Way of Heaven.
The farther you go,
The less you know.
Thus, the Sage knows without traveling.
Sees without looking.
And achieves without Ado.

(Lau) -
Without stirring abroad
One can know the whole world;
Without looking out of the window
One can see the way of heaven.
The further one goes
The less one knows.
Therefore the sage knows without having to stir.
Identifies without having to see.
Accomplishes without having to act.

(Chun)
One may know the world without going out of doors.
One may see the Way of Heaven without looking through the windows.
The farther one goes, the less one knows.
Therefore the sage knows without going about,
Understands without seeing,
And accomplishes without any action.

(Henricks)
No need to leave your door to know the whole world;
No need to peer through your windows to know the Way of Heaven.
The farther you go, the less you know.
Therefore the Sage knows without going,
Names without seeing,
And completes without doing a thing.
(Waley)
Without leaving his door
He knows everything under heaven.
Without looking out of his window
He knows all the ways of heaven.
For further on travels
The less one knows.
Therefore the Sage arrives without going.
Sees all without looking.
Does nothing, yet achieves everything.

(Lin)
Without stepping outside one's doors.
One can know what is happening in the world.
Without looking out of one's windows,
One can see the Tao of Heaven.
The farther one pursues knowledge,
The less one knows.
Therefore the Sage knows without running about.
Understands without seeing.
Accomplishes without doing.

(Cleary)
They know the world without even going out the door.
They see the sky and its pattern without even looking out the window.
The further out it goes, the less knowledge is;
therefore sages know without going.
name without seeing,
complete without striving.

(Fenge&English)
Without going outside, you may know the whole world.
Without looking through the window, you may see the ways of heaven.
The farther you go, the less you know.
Thus the sage knows without traveling;
He sees without looking;
He works without doing.
Learning consists in daily accumulating;
The practice of the Tao consists in daily diminishing.
Keep on diminishing and diminishing.
Until you reach the state of Non-advice.
Non-advice, and yet nothing is left undone.
To win the world, one must renounce all.
If one still has private ends to serve,
One will never be able to win the world.

In the pursuit of learning one knows more every day;
In the pursuit of the way one does less every day.
One does less and less until one does nothing at all,
and when one does nothing at all there is nothing that is undone.
It is always through not meddling that the empire is won.
Should you meddle, then you are not equal to the task of winning the empire.

The pursuit of learning is to increase day after day.
The pursuit of Tao is to decrease day after day.
It is to decrease and further decrease until one reaches the point of taking no action.
No action is undertaken, and yet nothing is left undone.
An empire is often brought to order by having no activity (laissez-faire).
If one (likes to) undertake activity, he is not qualified to govern the empire.

Those who work at their studies increase day after day;
Those who have heard the Tao decrease day after day.
They decrease and decrease till they get to the point where they do nothing.
They do nothing and yet there's nothing left undone.
When someone wants to take control of the world, he must always be unconcerned with affairs.
For in a case where he's concerned with affairs,
He'll be unworthy, as well, of taking control of the world.
(Waley)
Learning consists in adding to one's stock day by day:
The practice of Tao consists in subtracting day by day.
Subtracting and yet again subtracting
Till one has reached inactivity.
But by this very inactivity Everything can be activated.'
Those who of old won the adherence of all who live under heaven
All did so by not interfering.
Had they interfered,
They would never have won this adherence.

(Lin)
The student of knowledge (aims at) learning day by day:
The student of Tao (aims at) losing day by day.
By continual losing
One reaches doing nothing (laissez-faire).
By doing nothing everything is done.
He who conquers the world often does so by doing nothing.
When one is compelled to do something,
The world is already beyond his conquering.

(Cleary)
For learning you gain daily;
for the Way you lose daily.
Losing and losing,
this you reach noncontrivance;
be uncontrived, and nothing is not done.
Taking the world is always done
by not making anything of it.
For when something is made of it,
that is not enough to take the world.

(Feng&English)
In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired.
In the pursuit of Tao, every day something is dropped.
Less and less is done
Until non-action is achieved.
When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.
The world is ruled by letting things take their course.
It cannot be ruled by interfering.
The Sage has no interests of his own.
He takes as his own the mind of the people.
Those who are good I treat as good.
Those who are not good I also treat as good.
In doing so I gain in goodness.
Those who are of good faith I have faith in.
Those who are lacking in good faith I also have faith in.
In doing so I gain in good faith.
The sage in his attempt to distract the mind of the empire seeks urgently to muddle it.
The people all have something to occupy their eyes and ears, and the sage treats them all like children.

The sage has no fixed (personal) ideas.
He regards the people's ideas as his own.
I treat those who are good with goodness.
And I also treat those who are not good with goodness.
Thus goodness is attained.
I am honest to those who are honest.
And I am also honest to those who are not honest.
Thus honesty is attained.
The sage, in the government of his empire, has no subjective viewpoint.
His mind forms a harmonious whole with that of the people.
They all lend their eyes and ears, and he treats them all as infants.

The Sage constantly has no set mind;
He takes the mind of the common people as his mind.
Those who are good he regards as good;
Those who are not good he also regards as good.
In this way he attains goodness.
Those who are trustworthy he trusts;
And those who are not trustworthy he also trusts.
In this way he gets their trust.
As for the Sage's presence in the world -- he is one with it.
And with the world he merges his mind.
The common people all fix their eyes and ears on him.
And the Sage treats them all as his children.
(Waley)
The Sage has no heart of his own;
He uses the heart of the people as his heart.
Of the good man I approve,
But of the bad I also approve.
And thus he gets goodness.
The truthful man I believe, but the liar I also believe,
And thus he gets truthfulness.
The Sage, in his dealings with the world, seems like one dazed with fright;
For the world's sake he dulls his wits.
The Hundred Families all the time strain their eyes and ears.
The Sage all the time sees and hears no more than an infant sees and hears.

(Lin)
The Sage has no decided opinions and feelings.
But regards the people's opinions and feelings as his own.
The good ones I declare good;
The bad ones I also declare good.
That is the goodness of Virtue.
The honest ones I believe;
The liars I also believe;
That is the faith of Virtue.
The Sage dwells in the world peacefully, harmoniously.
The people of the world are brought into a community of heart, and the Sage regards them all as his own children.

(Cleary)
Sages have no fixed mind;
they make the minds of the people their mind;
they improve the good;
and also improve those how are not good;
that virtue is good.
They make sure of the true,
and they make sure of the untrue too;
that virtue is sure.
The relation of sages to the world is one of concern:
they cloud their minds for the world;
all people pour into their ears and eyes,
and sages render them innocent.

(Feng&English)
The sage has no mind of his own.
He is aware of the needs of others.
I am good to people who are good.
I am also good to people who are not good.
Because Virtue is goodness.
I have faith in people who are faithful.
I also have faith in people who are not faithful.
Because Virtue is faithful.
The sage is shy and humble -- to the world he seems confusing.
Others look to him and listen.
He behaves like a little child.
(Wu) FIFTY
When one is out of Life, one is in Death.
The companions of life are thirteen;
the companions of Death are thirteen;
and, when a living person moves into the Realm of Death, his companions are also thirteen.
How is this?
Because he draws upon the resources of Life too heavily.
It is said that he who knows well how to live meets no tigers or wild buffaloes on his road.
and comes out from the battleground untouched by the weapons of war.
For, in him, a buffalo would find no butt for his horns, a tiger nothing to lay claws upon, and a weapon of war no place to admit its point.
How is this?
Because there is no room for Death in him.

(Lau) When going one way means life
and going the other means death,
three in ten will be comrades of life,
three in ten will be comrades of death,
and there are those who value life
and as a result move into the realm of death, and these number three in ten.
Why is this so?
Because they set too much store by life.
I have heard it said that one who excels in safe-guarding his own life does not meet with rhinoceros or tiger when traveling on land nor is he touched by weapons when charging into an army.
There is nowhere for the rhinoceros to pitch its horn; there is nowhere for the tiger to place its claws; there is nowhere for the weapon to lodge its blade.
Why is this so?
Because for him there is no realm of death.

(Chan) Man comes into life and goes out to death.
Three out of ten are companions of life.
Three out of ten are companions of death.
And three out of ten in their lives lead from activity to death.
And for what reason?
Because of man's intensive striving after life.
I have heard that one who is a good preserver of his life will not meet tigers or wild buffaloes,
And in fighting will not try to escape from weapons of war.
The wild buffalo cannot butt its horn against him,
The tiger cannot fasten its claws in him.
And weapons of war cannot thrust their blades into him.
And for what reason?
Because in him there is no room for death.

(Henricks) We come into life and go back into death.
The companions of life are thirteen;
The companions of death are thirteen;
And yet people, because they regard life as LIFE, in all of their actions move toward the thirteen that belong to the realm of death.
Now, why is this so?
It's because they regard life as LIFE.
You've no doubt heard of those who are good at holding onto life:
When walking through hills, they don't avoid rhinos and tigers;
When they go into battle, they don't put on armor or shields;
The rhino has no place to probe with its horn;
The tiger finds no place to put its claws.
And weapons find no place to hold their blades.
Now, why is this so?
Because there is no place for death in them.
(Waley)
He who aims at life achieves death.
If the 'companions of life' are thirteen, so likewise are the 'companions of death' thirteen.
How is it that the 'death-spots' in a man's life are also thirteen?
It is because men feed life too grossly.
It is said that he who has a true hold on life,
when he walks on land does not meet tigers or wild buffaloes;
in battle he is not touched by weapons of war.
Indeed, a buffalo that attacked him would find nothing for its horn to butt, a tiger would find nothing for its claws to tear, a weapon would find no place for its point to enter in.
And why?
Because such men have no 'death-spot' in them.

(Lin)
Out of life, death enters.
The organs of life are thirteen:
The organs of death are (also) thirteen.
What send man to death in this life are also (these) thirteen.
How is it so?
Because of the intense activity of multiplying life.
It has been said that he who is a good preserver of his life meets no tigers or wild buffaloes on land.
Is not vulnerable to weapons in the field of battle.
The horns of the wild buffalo are powerless against him;
The paws of the tiger are useless against him;
The weapons of the soldier cannot avail against him.
How is it so?
Because he is beyond death.

(Cleary)
Exiting life, we enter death.
The followers of life are three out of ten,
the followers of death are three out of ten;
in the lives of the people, the dying grounds on which they are agitated are also three out of ten.
What is the reason?
Because of the seriousness with which they take life as life.
It has been said that those who maintain life well do not meet rhinos or tigers on land and do not arm themselves in war.
There is no way for rhinos to gore them;
there is no way for tigers to claw them;
there is no way for weapons to get at them.
Why? Because they have no dying ground.

(Feng&English)
Between birth and death.
Three in ten are followers of life.
Three in ten are followers of death.
And men just passing from birth to death also number three in ten.
Why is this so?
Because they live their lives on the gross level.
He who knows how to live can walk abroad
Without fear of rhinoceros or tiger.
He will not be wounded in battle.
For him rhinoceroses can find no place to thrust their horn.
Tigers no place to use their claws.
And weapons no place to pierce.
Why is this so?
Because he has no place for death to enter.
(Wu)--FIFTY-ONE
Tao gives them life.
Virtue nurses them.
Matter shapes them.
Environment perfects them.
Therefore all things without exception worship Tao and do homage to Virtue.
They have not been commanded to worship Tao and do homage to Virtue,
But they always do so spontaneously.
It is Tao that gives them life;
It is Virtue that nurses them,
grows them, fosters them, shelters them, comforts them, nourishes them, and covers them under her wings.
To give life but to claim nothing,
To do your work but to set no store by it,
To be a leader, not a butcher,
This is called hidden Virtue.

(Lau)
The way gives life;
Virtue rears them;
Things give them shape;
Circumstances bring them to maturity.
Therefore the myriad creatures all revere the way and honour virtue.
Yet the way is revered and virtue is honoured not because this is decreed by any authority but because it is natural for them to be treated so.
Thus the way gives them life and rears them;
Brings them up and nurses them;
Brings them to fruition and maturity;
Feeds and shelters them.
It gives them life yet claims no possession;
It benefits them yet exacts no gratitude;
It is the steward yet exercises no authority.
Such is called the mysterious virtue.

(Chan)
Tao produces them (the ten thousand things).
Virtue fosters them.
Matter gives them physical form.
The circumstances and tendencies complete them.
Therefore the ten thousand things esteem Tao and honor virtue.
Tao is esteemed and virtue honored without anyone's order.
They always come spontaneously.
Therefore Tao produces them and virtue fosters them,
They rear them and develop them.
They give them security and give them peace.
They nurture them and protect them.
(Tao) produces them but does not take possession of them.
It acts, but does not rely on its own ability.
It leads them but does not master them.
This is called profound and secret virtue.

(Henricks)
The Way gives birth to them and
Virtue nourishes them;
Substance gives them form and their unique capacities complete them.
Therefore the ten thousand things venerate the Way and honor Virtue.
As for their veneration of the Way and their honoring of Virtue--
No one rewards them for it; it's constantly so on its own.
The Way gives birth to them, nourishes them, matures them, completes them, rests them, rears them, supports them, and protects them.
It gives birth to them but doesn't try to own them;
It acts on their behalf but doesn't make them dependent;
It matures them but doesn't rule them.
This we call Profound Virtue.
(Waley)

Tao gave them birth.
The 'power' of Tao reared them.
Shaped them according to their kinds.
Perfected them, giving to each its strength.
Therefore of the ten thousand things there is not one that does not worship Tao and do homage to its 'power'.

No mandate ever went forth that accorded to Tao the right to be worshipped, nor its 'power' the right to receive homage.

It was always and of itself so.
Therefore as Tao bore them and the 'power' of Tao reared them, made them grow, fostered them, harboured them, brewed for them, so you must 'Rear them, but not lay claim to them, Control them, but never lean upon them, Be chief among them, but not manage them. This is called the mysterious power.'

(Lin)

Tao gives them birth.
Teh (virtue) fosters them.
The material world gives them form.
The circumstances of the moment complete them.
Therefore all things of the universe worship Tao and exalt Teh.
Tao is worshipped and Teh exalted
Without anyone's order and is so of its own accord.
Therefore Tao gives them birth.
Teh fosters them.
Makes them grow, develops them.
Gives them a harbor, a place to dwell in peace.
Feeds them and shelters them.
It gives them birth and does not own them.
Acts (helps) and does not appropriate them.
Is superior, and does not control them.

— This is the Mystic Virtue.

(Cleary)

The Way gives birth, virtue nurtures, things form, momentum completes. Therefore all beings honor the Way and value its Virtue.
The honor of the Way and the value of Virtue are not granted by anyone, but are always naturally so. So the Way gives birth and nurtures, makes grow and develops, completes and matures, builds up and breaks down. It produces but does not possess; it acts without presumption. It fosters growth without ruling. This is called hidden Virtue.

(Feng&English)

All things arise from Tao.
They are nourished by Virtue.
They are formed from matter.
They are shaped by environment. Thus the ten thousand things all respect Tao and honor Virtue.
Respect of Tao and honor of Virtue are not demanded, But they are in the nature of things. Therefore all things arise from Tao.
By Virtue they are nourished. Developed, cared for. Sheltered, comforted. Grown, and protected. Creating without claiming. Doing without taking credit. Guiding without interfering. This is Primal Virtue.
(Lau)  The world had a beginning
And this beginning could be the
mother of the world.
When you know the mother
Go on to know the child.
Go back to holding fast to the
mother,
And to the end of your days you
will not meet with danger.
Block the openings,
Shut the doors.
And all your life you will not run
dry.
Unblock the openings,
Add to your troubles,
And to the end of your days you
will be beyond salvation.
To see the small is called
discernment;
To hold fast to the submissive is
called strength.
Use the light
But give up the discernment.
Bring not misfortune upon
yourself.
This is known as following the
constant.

(Chan)  There was a beginning of the
universe
Which may be called the Mother
of the Universe.
He who has found the mother.
(Tao)
And thereby understands her
sons (things)
And having understood her sons,
Still keeps to its mother.
Will be free from danger
throughout his lifetime.
Close the mouth.
Shut the doors (of cunning and
desire).
And to the end of life there will
be (peace) without toil.
Open the mouth.
Meddle with affairs.
And to the end of life there will
be no salvation.
Seeing what is small is called
enlightenment.
Keeping to weakness is called
strength.
Use the light,
Revert to enlightenment.
And thereby avoid danger to
one's life --
This is called practicing the
eternal.

(Henricks)  The world had a beginning.
Which can be considered the
mother of the world.
Having attained the mother, in
order to understand her children.
If you return and hold on to the
mother, till the end of your life
you'll suffer no harm.
Block up the holes;
Close the doors;
And till the end of your life you'll
not labor.
Open the holes;
Meddle in affairs;
And till the end of your life you'll
not be saved.
To perceive the small is called
"discernment."
To hold on to the pliant is called
"strength."
If you use the rays to return to
the bright light,
You'll not abandon your life to
peril.
This is called Following the
Constant.
(Waley)
That which was the beginning of
all things under heaven
We may speak of as the 'mother'
of all things.
He who apprehends the mother
Thereby knows the sons.
And he who has known the sons
Will hold all the tighter to the
mother.
And to the end of his days suffer
no harm:
'Block the passages, shut the
doors,
And till the end your strength
shall not fail.
Open the passages, increase your
doings,
And till your last day no help
shall come to you.'
As good sight means seeing what
is very small
So strength means holding on to
what is weak.
He who having used the outer-light
can return to the inner-light
Is thereby preserved from all
harm.
This is called resorting to the
always-so.

(Lin)
There was a beginning of the
universe
Which may be regarded as the
Mother of the Universe.
Form the Mother, we may know
her sons.
After knowing the sons, keep to
the Mother.
Thus one's whole life may be
preserved from harm.
Stop its apertures.
Close its doors,
And one's whole life is without
toll.
Open its apertures.
Be busy about its affairs.
And one's whole life is beyond
redemption.
He who can see the small is
clear-sighted;
He who stays by gentility is
strong.
Use the light,
And return to clear-sightedness --
Thus cause not yourself later
distress.
-- This is to steal the Absolute.

(Cleary)
The world has a beginning
that is the mother of the world.
Once you’ve found the mother,
thereby you know the child.
Once you know the child,
you return to keep the mother,
not perishing though the body
die.
Close your eyes, shut your doors,
and you do not toil all your life.
Open your eyes, carry out your
affairs,
and you are not saved all your
life.
Seeing the small is called clarity;
keeping flexible is called
strength.
Using the shining radiance,
you return again to the light,
not leaving anything to harm
yourself.
This is called entering the
 eternal.

(Feng&English)
The beginning of the universe
Is the mother of all things.
Knowing the mother, one also
knows the sons.
Knowing the sons, yet remaining
in touch with the mother.
Brings freedom from the fear of
death.
Keep your mouth shut.
Guard the senses.
And life is ever full.
Open your mouth.
Always be busy.
And life is beyond hope.
Seeing the small is insight:
Yielding to force is strength.
Using the outer light, return to
insight.
And in this way be saved from
harm.
This is learning constancy.
(Wu) -- FIFTY-THREE

If only I had the tiniest grain of

wisdom,

I should walk in the Great Way,

And my only fear would be to

stray from it.

The Great Way is very smooth

and straight;

And yet the people prefer devious

paths.

The court is very clean and well

garnished.

But the fields are very weedy and

wild.

And the granaries are very

empty!

They wear gorgeous clothes,

They carry sharp swords.

They surfeit themselves with

food and drink.

The possess more riches than

they can use!

They are the heralds of

brigandage!

As for Tao, what do they know

about it?

(Lau)

Wrote I possessed of the least

knowledge,

I would, when walking on the

great way,

fear only paths that lead astray.

The great way is easy,

yet people prefer by-paths.

The court is corrupt.

The fields are overgrown with

weeds.

The granaries are empty;

Yet there are those dressed in

fineries,

With swords at their sides.

Filled with food and drink,

And possessed of too much

wealth.

This is known as taking the lead

in robbery.

Far indeed is this from the way.

(Chan)

If I had but little knowledge

I should, in walking on a broad

way,

Fear getting off the road.

Broad ways are extremely even,

But people are fond of by-paths.

The courts are exceedingly

splendid.

While the fields are exceedingly

weedy,

And the granaries are

exceedingly empty.

Elegant clothes are worn,

Sharp weapons are carried,

Foods and drinks are enjoyed

beyond limit.

And wealth and treasures are

accumulated in excess.

This is robbery and

extravagance.

This is indeed not Tao (the way).

(Henricks)

Were I to have the least bit of

knowledge,

in walking on a Great Road,

it's only going astray that I would

fear.

The Great Way is very level;

But people greatly delight in

tortuous paths.

The courts are swept very clean;

While the fields are full of

weeds;

And the granaries are all empty.

Their clothing -- richly

embroidered and colored;

While at their wastes they carry

sharp swords.

They gorge themselves on food,

and possessions and goods they

have plenty.

This is called thievery!

And thievery certainly isn't the

Way!
(Waley)

He who has the least scrap of sense,

Once he has got started on the great highway

Has nothing to fear so long as he avoids turnings.

For great highways are safe and easy.

But men love by-paths.

So long as the Court is in order

They are content to let their fields run to weed.

And their granaries stand empty.

They wear patterns and embroideries.

Carry sharp swords.

Glut themselves with drink and food

Have more possessions than they can use.

These are the riotous ways of brigandage;

They are not the Highway.

(Lin)

If I were possessed of austere knowledge,

Walking on the Main Path (Tao),

I would avoid the by-paths.

The Main Path is easy to walk on.

Yet people love the small by-paths.

The (official) courts are spic and span.

(While) the fields go untilled,

And the granaries are very low.

(Yet) clad in embroidered gowns,

And carrying fine swords.

Surfeit with good food and drinks.

(They are) splitting with wealth and possessions.

--This is to lead the world toward brigandage.

Is it not the corruption of Tao?

(Cleary)

Causing one flashes of knowledge
to travel the Great Way,

Only its application demands care.

The Great Way is quite even,
yet people prefer byways.

When courts are extremely fastidious,

The fields are seriously neglected,

And the granaries are very empty;

They wear colorful clothing and carry sharp swords,

Eat and drink to their fill

And possess more than enough.

This is called the vanity of thieves;

It is not the Way.

(Feng&English)

If I have even just a little sense,

I will walk on the main road and my only fear will be of straying from it.

Keeping to the main road is easy.

But people love to be sidetracked.

When the court is arrayed in splendor.

The fields are full of weeds.

And the granaries are bare.

Some wear gorgeous clothes.

Carry sharp swords.

And indulge themselves with food and drink.

They have more possessions than they can use.

They are robber barons.

This is certainly not the way of Tao.
(Lau) What is firmly rooted cannot be pulled out;
What is tightly held in the arms will not slip loose;
Through this the offering of sacrifice by descendants will never come to an end.
Cultivate it in your person
And its virtue will be genuine;
Cultivate it in the family
And its virtue will be more than sufficient;
Cultivate it in the hamlet
And its virtue will endure;
Cultivate it in the state
And its virtue will abound;
Cultivate it in the empire
And its virtue will be pervasive.
Hence look at the person through the person;
Look at the family through the family;
Look at the hamlet through the hamlet;
Look at the state through the state;
Look at the empire through the empire.
How do I know that the empire is like that?
By means of this.

(Chan) He who is well established (in Tao) cannot be pulled away.
He who has a firm grasp (of Tao) cannot be separated from it.
Thus from generation to generation his ancestral sacrifice will never be suspended.
When one cultivates virtue in his person, it becomes genuine virtue.
When one cultivates virtue in his family, it becomes overflowing virtue.
When one cultivates virtue in his community, it becomes lasting virtue.
When one cultivates virtue in his country, it becomes abundant virtue.
When one cultivates virtue in the world, it becomes universal.
Therefore the person should be viewed as a person.
The family should be viewed as a family.
The community should be viewed as a community.
The country should be viewed as a country.
And the world should be viewed as the world.
How do I know this to be the case in the world?
Through this (from the cultivation of virtue in the person to that in the world).

(Hearlicks) What is firmly set up can't be pulled down;
What is firmly embraced cannot slip free.
And your sons and grandsons, as a result, will sacrifice without end.
When you cultivate it in your person, your virtue will then be genuine;
When you cultivate it in your family, your virtue will then overflow;
When you cultivate it in your village, your virtue will then be long lasting;
When you cultivate it in your state, your virtue will then be abundant;
And when you cultivate it throughout the world, your virtue will then be widespread.
Use the individual to examine the individual;
Use the family to examine the family;
Use the village to examine the village;
Use the state to examine the state;
And use the world to examine the world;
How do I know that the world is so?
By this.
(Waley)
What Tao plants cannot be plucked,
What Tao clasps cannot slip.
By its virtue alone can one
generation after another carry on
the ancestral sacrifice.
Apply it to yourself and by its
power you will be freed from
dross.
Apply it to your household and
your household shall thereby have
abundance.
Apply it to the village, and the
village will be made secure.
Apply it to the kingdom, and the
kingdom shall thereby be made to
flourish.
Apply it to an empire, and the
empire shall thereby be extended.
Therefore just as through oneself
one may contemplate Oneself,
So through the household one
may contemplate the Household.
And through the village, one may
contemplate the Village,
And through the kingdom, one
may contemplate the Kingdom.
And through the empire, one may
contemplate the Empire.
How do I know that the empire is
so?
By this (n. what is inside me).

(Lin)
Who is firmly established is not
easily shaken.
Who has a firm grasp does not
easily let go.
From generation to generation
his ancestral sacrifices shall be
continued without fall.
Cultivated in the individual,
Virtue will become genuine;
Cultivated in the family, Virtue
will become abundant;
Cultivated in the village, Virtue
will multiply;
Cultivated in the state, Virtue
will prosper;
Cultivated in the world, Virtue
will become universal.
Therefore:
According to (the virtue of )
the individual, judge the individual;
According to (the virtue of )
the family, judge the family;
According to (the virtue of )
the village, judge the village;
According to (the virtue of )
the state, judge the state;
According to (the virtue of )
the world, judge the world.
How do I know the world is so.
By this.

(Cleary)
Good construction does not fall
down,
a good embrace does not let go;
their heirs honor them
unceasingly.
Cultivate it in yourself, and that
virtue is real;
cultivate it in the home, and that
virtue is abundant;
cultivate it in the locality, and
that virtue lasts;
cultivate it in the nation, and that
virtue is rich;
cultivate it in the world, and that
virtue is universal.
So observe yourself by yourself,
observe the home by the home,
observe the locality by the
locality,
observe the nation by the nation,
observe the world by the world.
How do I know the world is as it
is?
By this:

(Feng&English)
What is firmly established cannot
be uprooted.
What is firmly grasped cannot
slip away.
It will be honored from
generation to generation.
Cultivate Virtue in yourself.
And Virtue will be real.
Cultivate it in the family.
And Virtue will abound.
Cultivate it in the village.
And Virtue will grow.
Cultivate it in the nation.
And Virtue will abundant.
Cultivate it in the universe.
And Virtue will be everywhere.
Therefore look at the body as
body;
Look at the family as family;
Look at the village as village;
Look at the nation as nation;
Look at the universe as universe.
How do I know the universe is
like this?
By looking!
One who embraces the fullness of Virtue,
Can be compared to a newborn babe.
Wasps and scorpions, snakes and vipers do not sting him;
His bones and muscles are weak and pliant, yet his grasp is firm;
He does not yet know the meeting of male and female,
yet his organ is aroused --
This is because his essence is at its height.
He can scream all day; yet he won't become hoarse --
This is because his harmony is at its height.
To know harmony is called "the constant;"
To know the constant is called "being wise;"
To add on to life is called a "bad omen;"
For the mind to control the breath -- that's called "forcing things."
When things reach their prime, they get old;
This is called "not the Way."
What is not the Way will come to an early end.
(Waley)
The impurity of things fraught with the 'power'
May be likened to that of an infant.
Poisonous insects do not sting it.
Nor fierce beasts seize it.
Nor clawing birds maul it.
Its bones are soft, its sinews weak; but its grip is strong.
Not yet to have known the union of male and female, but to be completely formed.
Means that the vital force is at its height;
To be able to scream all day without getting hoarse.
Means that harmony is at its perfection.
To understand such harmony is to understand the always-so.
To understand the always-so is to be illumined.
But to fill life to the brim is to invite omens.
If the heart makes calls upon the life-breath, rigidity follows.
Whatever has a time of vigour also has a time of decay.
Such things are against Tao.
And whatever is against Tao is soon destroyed.

(Lin)
Who is rich in virtue
Is like a child.
No poisonous insects sting him.
No wild beasts attack him.
And no birds of prey pounce upon him.
His bones are soft, his sinews tender, yet his grip is strong.
Not knowing the union of male and female, yet his organs are complete.
Which means his vigor is unspoiled.
Crying the whole day, yet his voice never runs hoarse.
Which means his (natural) harmony is perfect.
To know harmony is to be in accord with the eternal.
(And) to know eternity is called discerning.
(But) to improve upon life is called ill-omen;
To let go the emotions through impulse is called assertiveness.
(For) things age after reaching their prime;
That (assertiveness) would be against Tao.
And he who is against Tao perishes young.

(Cleary)
The richness of subliminal virtue
is comparable to an infant:
poisonous creatures do not sting it.
wild beasts do not claw it,
predatory birds do not grab it.
Its tendons are flexible,
yet its grip is firm.
Even while it knows not the mating of male and female,
it has the epitome of vitality.
It can cry all day without choking or getting hoarse;
this is the epitome of harmony.
Knowing harmony is called constancy,
Knowing constancy is called clarity.
Enhancing life is called propitious,
the mind mastering energy is called strong.
When beings climax in power,
they wane;
this is called being unguided.
The unguided die early.

(Feng&English)
He who is filled with Virtue is like a newborn child.
Wasp and serpents will not sting him;
He will not be attacked by birds of prey.
His bones are soft, his muscles weak.
But his grip is firm.
He has not experienced the union of man and woman.
but is whole.
His manhood is strong.
He screams all day without becoming hoarse.
This is perfect harmony.
Knowing harmony is constancy.
Knowing constancy is enlightenment.
It is not wise to rush about.
Controlling the breath causes strain.
If too much energy is used,
exhaustion follows.
This is not the way of Tao.
Whatever is contrary to Tao will not last long.
(Wu)--FIFTY-SIX
He who knows does not speak.
He who speaks does not know.
Block all the passages!
Shut all the doors!
Blunt all edges!
Unite all tangles!
Harmonize all lights!
Unite the world into one whole!
This is called the Mystical Whole,
Which you cannot court after nor shun.
Benefit nor harm, honour nor humble.
Therefore, it is the Highest of the world.

(Lau)
One who knows does not speak;
one who speaks does not know.
Block the openings;
Shut the doors.
Blunt the sharpness;
Untangle the knots;
Soften the glare;
Let your wheels move only along old ruts.
This is known as mysterious sameness.
Hence you cannot get close to it,
nor can you keep it at arm's length;
you cannot bestow benefit on it,
nor can you do it harm;
you cannot ennoble it, nor can
you debase it.
Therefore it is valued by the empire.

(Chan)
He who knows does not speak.
He who speaks does not know.
Close the mouth.
Shut the doors (of cunning desires).
Blunt the sharpness.
Unite the tangles.
Soften the light.
Become one with the dusty world.
This is called profound identification.
Therefore it is impossible either
to be intimate and close to him or
to be distant and indifferent to him.
It is impossible either to benefit
him or to harm him,
It is impossible either to honor
him or to disgrace him.
For this reason he is honored by
the world.

(Henricks)
Those who know don't talk about it;
those who talk don't know it.
He blocks up his holes.
Closes his doors.
Softens the glare,
Sets the dust.
Files down the sharp edges.
And untied the tangles.
This is called Profound Union.
Therefore, there is no way to get
intimate with him.
But there is also no way to shun
him.
There is no way to benefit him.
But there is also no way to harm
him.
There is no way to ennoble him.
But there is also no way to
debase him.
For this very reason he's the
noblest thing in the world.
(Waley)
Those who know do not speak:
Those who speak do not know.
Block the passages.
Shut the doors.
Let all sharpness be blunted.
All tangles untied.
All glare tempered.
All dust smoothed.
This is called the mysterious leveling.
He who has achieved it cannot
either be drawn into friendship or
repelled.
Cannot be benefited, cannot be
harmed.
Cannot either be raised or
humbled.
And for that very reason is
highest of all creatures under
heaven.

(Lin)
He who knows does not speak;
He who speaks does not know.
Fill up its apertures.
Close its doors.
Dull its edges.
Untie its tangles.
Soften its light.
Submerge its turmoil.
-- This is the Mystic Unity.
Then love and hatred cannot
touch him.
Profit and loss cannot reach him.
Honor and disgrace cannot affect
him.
Therefore is he always the
honored one of the world.

(Cleary)
Those who know do not say;
those who say do not know.
Close the senses.
shut the doors;
blunt the sharpness.
resolve the complications;
harmonize the light.
assimilate to the world.
This is called mysterious
sameness.
It cannot be made familiar.
yet cannot be estranged;
it cannot be profited.
yet cannot be harmed;
it cannot be valued.
yet cannot be demeaned.
Therefore it is precious for the
world.

(Feng&English)
Those who know do not talk.
Those who talk do not know.
Keep your mouth closed.
Guard your senses.
Temper your sharpness.
Mask your brightness.
Be at one with the dust of the
earth.
This is primal union.
He who has achieved this state
is unconcerned with friends and
enemies.
With good and harm, with honor
and disgrace.
This therefore is the highest state
of man.
(Wu)--FIFTY-SEVEN
  You govern a kingdom by
  normal rules;
  You fight a war by exceptional
  moves;
  But you win the world by letting
  alone.
  How do I know that this is so?
  By what is within me!
  The more taboos and inhibitions
  there are in the world,
  The poorer the people become.
  The sharper the weapons the
  people possess,
  The greater confusion reigns in
  the realm.
  The more clever and crafty the
  men.
  The oftener strange things
  happen.
  The more articulate the laws and
  ordinances.
  The more robbers and thieves
  arise.
  Therefore, the Sage says:
  I do not make a fuss, and the
  people transform themselves.
  I love quietude, and the people
  settle down in their regular
  grooves.
  I do not engage myself in
  anything, and the people grow
  rich.
  I have no desires, and the people
  return to Simplicity.

(Lau)
  Govern the state by being
  straightforward;
  wage war by being crafty;
  but win the empire by not being
  meddlesome.
  How do I know that it is like
  that?
  By means of this.
  The more taboos there are in the
  empire
  The poorer the people;
  The more sharpened tools the
  people have
  The more enlightened the state;
  The more skills the people have
  The further novelties multiply;
  The better known the laws and
  edicts
  The more thieves and robbers
  there are.
  Hence the sage says,
  I take no action and the people
  are transformed of themselves;
  I prefer stillness and the people
  are rectified of themselves;
  I am not meddlesome and the
  people prosper of themselves;
  I am free from desire and the
  people of themselves become
  simple like the uncarved block.

(Chan)
  Govern the state with
  correctness.
  Operate the army with surprise
  tactics.
  Administer the empire by
  engaging in no activity.
  How do I know that this should
  be so?
  Through this:
  The more taboos and
  prohibitions there are in the world,
  The poorer the people will be.
  The more sharp weapons the
  people have.
  The more troubled the state will
  be.
  The more cunning and skill man
  possesses.
  The more vicious things will
  appear.
  The more laws and orders are
  made prominent.
  The more thieves and robbers
  there will be.
  Therefore the sage says:
  I take no action and the people of
  themselves are transformed.
  I love tranquillity and the people
  of themselves become transformed.
  I love tranquillity and the people
  of themselves become correct.
  I engage in no activity and the
  people of themselves become
  simple.

(Henricks)
  Use the right and correct to order
  the state;
  Use surprise tactics when you
  use troops;
  Use unconcern with affairs to
  take control of the world.
  How do I know this is so?
  Well, the more taboos and
  prohibitions there are in the world,
  the poorer the people will be;
  The more sharp weapons the
  people possess, the more muddled
  the states will be;
  The more knowledge and skill
  people have, the more novel things
  will appear;
  The more legal matters are made
  prominent, the more robbers and
  thieves there will be.
  Therefore, the words of the Sage
  say:
  I do nothing, and the people of
  themselves are transformed;
  I love tranquillity, and the people
  of themselves are upright;
  I'm unconcerned with affairs, and
  the people of themselves become
  rich;
  I desire not to desire, and the
  people of themselves are genuine
  and simple, like uncarved wood.
(Waley)
'Kingdoms can only be governed if rules are kept; Battles can only be won if rules are broken.'
But adherence of all under heaven can only be won by letting-alone.
How do I know that it is so?
By this,
The more prohibitions there are, the more ritual avoidance.
The poorer the people will be.
The more 'sharp weapons' there are.
The more bountiful will the whole land grow.
The more cunning craftsmen there are.
The more pernicious contrivances will be invented.
The more laws are promulgated.
The more thieves and bandits there will be.
Therefore a sage has said:
So long as I do nothing the people will of themselves be transformed.
So long as I love quietude, the people will of themselves go straight.
So long as I act only by inactivity the people will of themselves become prosperous.
So long as I have no wants the people will of themselves return to the 'State of the Uncarved Block'.

(Lin)
Rule a kingdom by the Normal. Fight a battle by (abnormal) tactics of surprise.
Win the world by doing nothing. How do I know it is so?
Through this:
The more prohibitions there are, the poorer the people become.
The more sharp weapons there are.
The more prevailing chaos there is in the state.
The more skills of technique.
The more cunning things are produced.
The greater the number of statutes.
The greater the number of thieves and brigands.
Therefore the Sage says:
I do nothing and the people are reformed of themselves.
I love quietude and the people are righteous of themselves.
I deal in no business and the people grow rich by themselves.
I have no desires and the people are simple and honest by themselves.

(Cleary)
Use straightforwardness for civil government.
Use surprise for military operations;
Use noninvolvement to take the world.
How do I know this?
The more taboos there are in the world.
The poorer the populace is;
The more crafts the people have, the more exotic things are produced;
The more laws are promulgated, the greater the number of thieves.
Therefore the sage says:
I contrive nothing, and the people are naturally civilized;
I am fond of tranquillity, and the people are naturally upright.
I have nothing to do, and the people are naturally enriched;
I have no desire, and the people are naturally simple.

(Feng&English)
Rule a nation with justice.
Wage a war with surprise moves.
Become master of the universe without striving.
How do I know this is so?
Because of this!
The more laws and restrictions there are,
The poorer people become.
The sharper men's weapons.
The more trouble in the land.
The more ingenious and clever men are.
The more strange things happen.
The more rules and regulations.
The more thieves and robbers.
Therefore the sage says:
I take no action and people are reformed.
I enjoy peace and people become honest.
I do nothing and people become rich.
I have no desires and people return to the good and simple life.
(Wu)--FIFTY-EIGHT
Where the ruler is mum, mum,
The people are simple and
happy.
Where the ruler is sharp, sharp,
The people are wily and
discontented.
Bad fortune is what good fortune
leans on,
Good fortune is what bad fortune
hides in.
Who knows the ultimate end of
the process?
Is there no norm of right?
Yet what is normal soon becomes
abnormal.
And what is auspicious soon
turns ominous.
Long indeed have the people
been in a quandary.
Therefore, the Sage squares
without cutting,
carves without disfiguring,
straightens without straining,
enlightens without dazzling.

(Lau)
When the government is muddled
The people are simple;
When the government is alert
The people are cunning.
It is on disaster that good fortune
perches;
It is beneath good fortune that
disaster crouches.
Who knows the limit?
Does not the straightforward
exist?
The straightforward changes
again into the crafty,
and the good changes again into
the monstrous.
Indeed, it is long since the people
were perplexed.
Therefore the sage is square-
edged but does not scrape.
Has corners but does not jab,
Extends himself but not at the
expense of others.
Shines but does not dazzle.

(Chan)
When the government is non-
discriminative and dull.
The people are contented and
generous.
When the government is
searching and discriminative.
The people are disappointed and
contentious.
Calamity is that upon which
happiness depends;
Happiness is that in which
calamity is latent.
Who knows when the limit will
be reached?
Is there no correctness (used to
govern the world)?
The correct again becomes the
pervasive
And the good will again become
evil.
The people have been deluded for
a long time.
Therefore the sage is as pointed
as a square but does not pierce.
He is as acute as a knife but does
not cut.
He is as straight as an unheat
line but does not extend.
He is as bright as light but does
dazzle.

(Henricks)
When the government is muddles
and confused.
The people are genuine and
sincere.
When the government is
discriminate and clear.
The state is crafty and cunning.
Disaster is that on which good
fortune depends.
Good fortune is that in which
disaster's concealed.
Who knows where it will end?
For there is no fixed "correct."
The "correct" turns into the
"deviant;"
And "good" turns into "evil."
People's state of confusion
Has certainly existed for a long
time.
Therefore be square but don't
cut;
Be sharp but don't stab;
Be straightforward but not
unrestrained;
Be bright but don't dazzle.
(Waley)
When the ruler looks depressed
the people will be happy and
satisfied;
When the ruler looks lively and
self-assured the people will be
carping and discontented.
'It is upon bad fortune that good
fortune leans, upon good fortune
that bad fortune rests.'
But few know it, there is a bourn
where there is neither right nor
wrong;
In a realm where every straight is
doubled by a crooked,
and every good by an ill,
surely mankind has gone long
enough astray?
Therefore the Sage
Squares without cutting,
Shapes the corners without
lapping,
Straightens without stretching,
Gives forth light without shining.

(Lin)
When the government is lazy and
dull,
Its people are unspoiled;
When the government is efficient
and smart.
Its people are discontented.
Disaster is the avenue of fortune.
(And) fortune is the concealment
for disaster.
Who would be able to know its
ultimate results?
(As it is,) there would never be
the normal.
But the normal would
(immediately) revert to the
deceitful.
And the good revert to the
sinister.
Thus long has mankind gone
astray!
Therefore the Sage is square (has
firm principles), but not cutting
(sharp-cornered),
Has integrity but does not hurt
(others),
Is straight, but not high-handed,
Bright, but not dazzling.

(Cleary)
When the government is
unobtrusive,
the people are pure.
When the government is
invasive.
the people are wanting.
Calamity is what fortune depends
upon;
fault is what calamity
subdues.
Who knows how it will all end?
Is there no right and wrong?
The orthodox also becomes
unorthodox.
the good also becomes ill;
people's confusion
is indeed long-standing.
Therefore sages are upright
without causing injury,
honest without hurting,
direct but not tactless,
illumined but not flashy.

(Feng&English)
When the country is ruled with a
light hand
The people are simple.
When the country is ruled with
severity.
The people are cunning.
Happiness is rooted in misery.
Misery lurks beneath happiness.
Who knows what the future
holds?
There is no honesty.
Honesty becomes dishonest.
Goodness becomes wheats.
Man's bewilderment lasts for a
long time.
Therefore the sage is sharp but
not cunning.
Pointed by not piercing,
Straightforward but not
unrestrained.
Brilliant but not blinding.
In ruling the people and in serving Heaven, it is best for a ruler to be sparing. It is because he is sparing that he may be said to follow the way from the start. Following the way from the start he may be said to accumulate an abundance of virtue. Accumulating an abundance of virtue there is nothing he cannot overcome; when there is nothing he cannot overcome, no one knows his limit; when no one knows his limit he can possess a state; when he possesses the mother of a state he can then endure. This is called the way of deep roots and firm stems by which one lives to see many days.

To rule people and to serve Heaven there is nothing better than to be frugal. Only by being frugal can one recover quickly. To recover quickly means to accumulate virtue heavily. By the heavy accumulation of virtue one can overcome everything. If one can overcome everything, then he will acquire a capacity the limit of which is beyond anyone's knowledge. When his capacity is beyond anyone's knowledge, he is fit to rule a state. He who possesses the Mother (Tao) of the state will last long. This means that the roots are deep and the stalks are firm, which is the way of long life and everlasting existence.

For ordering humanity and serving Heaven, nothing's so good as being sparing. For only if you are sparing can you, therefore, early submit to the Way.

Early submission — this is called to repeatedly accumulate Virtue. If you repeatedly accumulate Virtue, then there is nothing you can't overcome.

When there is nothing you can't overcome, no one knows where it will end. When no one knows where it will end, you can possess the state. And when you possess the mother of the state, you can last a very long time. This is called having deep roots and a firm base. It's the Way of long life and long-lasting vision.
(Waley)
You cannot rule men nor serve heaven unless you have laid up a store:
'This 'laying up a store' means quickly absorbing.
And 'quickly absorbing' means doubling one's garnered 'power'.
Double your garnered power and it acquires a strength that nothing can overcome.
If there is nothing it cannot overcome, it knows no bounds.
And only what knows no bounds is huge enough to keep a whole kingdom in its grasp.
But only he who having the kingdom goes to the Mother Can keep it long.
This is called the art of making roots strike deep by fencing the trunk.
of making long by fixed staring.

(Lin)
In managing human affairs, there is no better rule than to be sparing.
To be sparing is to forestall;
To forestall is to be prepared and strengthened;
To be prepared and strengthened is to be ever-victorious;
To be ever-victorious is to have infinite capacity;
He who has infinite capacity is fit to rule a country.
And the Mother (principle) of a ruling country can long endure.
This is to be firmly rooted, to have deep strength.
The road to immortality and enduring vision.

(Cleary)
To govern the human and serve the divine.
Nothing compares to frugality.
Only frugality brings early recovery;
early recovery means buildup of power.
Build up virtue, and master all.
When you master all, no one knows your limit.
When no one knows your limit, you can maintain a nation.
When you maintain the matrix of a nation, you can last long.
This is called making the root deep and the basis firm,
the Way of long life and eternal vision.

(Feng&English)
In caring for others and serving heaven.
There is nothing like using restraint.
Restraint begins with giving up one's own ideas.
This depends on Virtue gathered in the past.
If there is a good store of Virtue, then nothing is impossible.
If nothing is impossible, then there are no limits.
If a man knows no limits, then he is fit to be a ruler.
The mother principle of ruling holds good for a long time.
This is called having deep roots and a firm foundation.
The Tao of long life and eternal vision.
(Wu)--SIXTY
Ruling a big kingdom is like cooking a small fish.
When a man of Tao reigns over the world, demons have no spiritual powers.
Not that the demons have no spiritual powers, but the spirits themselves do no harm to men.
Not that the spirits do no harm to men, but the Sage himself does no harm to his people.
If only the ruler and his people would refrain from harming each other, all the benefits of life would accumulate in the kingdom.

(Lau)
Governing a large state is like boiling a small fish.
When the empire is ruled in accordance with the way,
The spirits lose their potencies.
Or rather, it is not that they lose their potencies.
But that, though they have their potencies, they do not harm the people.
It is not only they who, having their potencies, do not harm the people.
The sage, also, does not harm the people.
As neither does any harm, each attributes the merits to the other.

(Chan)
Ruling a big country is like cooking a small fish.
If Tao is employed to rule the empire,
Spiritual beings will lose their supernatural power.
Not that they lose their spiritual power,
But their spiritual power can no longer harm people.
Not only will their supernatural power not harm people,
But the sage also will not harm people.
When both do not harm each other,
Virtue will be accumulated in both for the benefit (of the people).

(Henricks)
Ruling a large state is like cooking small fish.
When you use the Way to govern the world, evil spirits won't have godlike power.
Actually, it's not that evil spirits won't have godlike power.
It's that their power will not harm men.
But it's not just that their power won't harm men.
The Sage, also, will not harm them.
Since these two do not harm others.
Therefore their Virtues intermingle and return to them.
(Waley)
Ruling a large kingdom is indeed like cooking small fish.
They who by Tao ruled all that is under heaven did not let an evil spirit within them display its powers.
Nay, it was not only that the evil spirit did not display its powers; neither was the Sage's good spirit used to the hurt of other men.
Nor was it only that his good spirit was not used to harm other men, the Sage himself was thus saved from harm.
And so, each being saved from harm, their 'powers' could converge towards a common end.

(Lin)
Rule a big country as you would fry a small fish.
Who rules the world in accord with Tao
Would find that the spirits lose their power.
It is not that the spirits lose their power.
But that they cease to do people harm.
It is no (only) that they cease to do people harm.
The Sage (himself) also does no harm to the people.
When both do not do each other harm, Virtue (power) flows towards them.

(Cleary)
Governing a large nation is like cooking a little fish.
When the world is ruled by the Way, the ghosts are powerless.
It is not that the ghosts are powerless;
their spirits do not harm the people.
Not only do the spirits not harm the people;
sages do not harm the people either.
Because the two do not harm each other, their virtues ultimately combine.

(Feng & English)
Ruling the country is like cooking a small fish.
Approach the universe with Tao.
And evil will have no power.
Not that evil is not powerful.
But its power will not be used to harm others.
Not only will it do no harm to others.
But the sage himself will also be protected.
They do not hurt each other.
And the Virtue in each one refreshes both.
(Wu)--SIXTY-ONE
A great country is like the
towland toward which all streams
flow.
It is the Reservoir of all under
heaven, the Feminine of the world.
The Feminine always conquers
the Masculine by her quietness, by
lowering herself through her
quietness.
Hence, is a great country can
lower itself before a small country,
it will win over the small country;
and if a small country can lower
itself before a great country, it will
win over the great country.
The one wins by stooping; the
other, by remaining low.
What a great country wants is
simply to embrace more people;
and what a small country wants
is simply to come to serve its
patron.
Thus, each gets what it wants.
But it behooves a great country
to lower itself.

(Lau)
A large state is the lower reaches
of a river --
The place where all the streams
of the world unite.
In the union of the world,
The female always gets the better
of the male by stillness.
Being still, she takes the lower
position.
Hence the large state, by taking
the lower position, annexes the
small state;
The small state, by taking the
lower position, affiliates itself to
the large state.
Thus the one, by taking the lower
position, annexes;
The other, by taking the lower
position, is annexed.
All that the large state wants is
to take the other under its wing;
All that the small state wants is
to have its services accepted by the
other.
If each of the two wants to find
its proper place,
It is meet that the large should
take the lower position.

(Chan)
A big country may be compared
to the lower part of a river.
It is the converging point of the
world;
It is the female of the world.
The female always overcomes
the male by tranquillity.
And by tranquillity she is
underneath.
A big state can take over a small
state if it places itself below the
small state;
And the small state can take over
a big state if it places itself below
the big state.
Thus some, by placing
themselves below, take over
(others),
And some, by being (naturally)
low, take over (other states).
After all, what a big state wants
to but to annex and herd others.
And what a small state wants
merely to join and serve others.
Since both big and small states
get what they want.
The big state should place itself
low.

(Henricks)
The large state is the lower part
of a river;
It is the female of the world;
It is the meeting point of the
world.
The female constantly overcomes
the male with tranquillity.
Because she is tranquil, therefore
she is fittingly underneath.
The large state -- if it is below
the small state, then it takes over
the small state;
The small state -- if it is below
the large state, then it is taken over
by the large state.
Therefore some by being low
take over,
And some by being low are taken
over.
Therefore the large state merely
desires to unite and rear others;
While the small state merely
desires to enter and serve others.
If both get what they want.
Then the large state should
fittingly be underneath.
(Waley)
A large kingdom must be like the low ground towards which all streams flow down.
It must be a point towards which all things under heaven converge.
Its part must be that of the female in its dealings with all things under heaven.
The female by quiescence conquers the male; by quiescence gets underneath.
If a large kingdom can in the same way succeed in getting underneath a small kingdom then it will win the adherence of the small kingdom;
and it is because small kingdoms are by nature in this way underneath large kingdoms that they win the adherence of large kingdoms.
The one must get underneath in order to do it;
the other is underneath and therefore does it.
What large countries really need is more inhabitants;
and what small countries need is some place where their surplus inhabitants can go and get employment.
Thus each gets what it needs.
That is why I say the large kingdom must 'get underneath'.

(Lin)
A big country (must be like) the delta low-regions,
Being the concourse of the world.
(And) the Female of the world.
The Female overcomes the Male
by quietude.
And achieves the lowly position
by quietude.
Therefore if a big country places itself below a small country,
It absorbs the small country;
(And) if a small country places itself below a big country.
It absorbs the big country.
Therefore some place themselves low to absorb (others).
Some are (naturally) low and absorb (others).
What a big country wants is but to shelter others.
And what a small country wants is but to be able to come in and be sheltered.
Thus (considering) that both may have what they want.
A big country ought to place itself low.

(Cleary)
A great nation flows downward into intercourse with the world.
The female of the world always prevails over the male by stillness.
Because stillness is considered lower,
by lowering itself to a small nation
a great nation takes a small nation;
by being lower than a great nation
a small nation takes a great nation.
So one takes by lowering itself, another takes by being lower.
A great nation wants no more than to include and nurture people;
a small nation wants no more than to admit and serve people.
Both get what they want, so the great should be below.

(Feng&English)
A great country is like low land.
It is the meeting ground of the universe.
The mother of the universe.
The female overcomes the male with stillness.
Lying low in stillness.
Therefore if a great country gives way to a smaller country,
It will conquer the smaller country.
And if a small country submits to a great country,
It can conquer the great country.
Therefore those who would conquer must yield,
And those who conquer do so because they yield.
A great nation needs more people;
A small country needs to serve.
Each gets what it wants.
It is fitting for a great nation to yield.
The Tao is the hidden Reservoir of all things. A treasure to the honest, it is a safeguard to the erring. A good word will find its own market. A good deed may be used as a gift to another. That a man is straying from the right path Is no reason that he should be cast away. Hence, at the Enthronement of an Emperor, Or at the Installation of the Three Ministers. Let others offer their discs of jade, following it up with teams of horses; It is better for you to offer the Tao without moving your feet! Why did the ancients prize the Tao? Is it not because by virtue of it he who seeks finds, And the guilty are forgiven? That is why it is such a treasure to the world.

The way is the refuge for the myriad creatures. It is that by which the good man protects, And that by which the bad man is protected. Beautiful words when offered will win high rank in return; Beautiful deeds can raise a man above others. Even if a man is not good, why should he be abandoned? Hence when the emperor is set up and the three ducal ministers are appointed, he who makes a present of the way without stirring from his seat is preferable to one who offers presents of jade disks followed by a team of four horses. Why was this way valued of old? Was it not said that by means of it one got what one wanted and escaped the consequences when one transgressed? Therefore it is valued by the empire.

Tao is the storehouse of all things. It is the good man's treasure and the bad man's refuge. Fine words can buy honor, And fine deeds can gain respect from others. Even if a man is bad, when has (Tao) rejected him? Therefore on the occasion of crowning an emperor or installing the three ministers, Rather than present large pieces of jade preceded by teams of four horses, It is better to kneel and offer this Tao. Why did the ancients highly value this Tao? Did they not say, "Those who seek shall have it and those who sin shall be freed"? For this reason it is valued by the world.

The way is that toward which all things flow. It is the treasure of the good man. And that which protects the bad man. Beautiful words can be bought and sold; Honored deeds can be presented to others as gifts; Even with things that people regard as no good -- will they be rejected? Therefore, when the Son of Heaven is being enthroned or the Three Ministers installed, Though you might salute them with disks of jade preceded by teams of four horses, That's not so good as sitting still and offering this. The reason why the ancients valued this -- what was it? Did they not say, "Those who seek, with this will attain, and those who commit offenses, with this will escape"?! Therefore, it's the most valued thing in the world.
(Waley)
Tao in the Universe is like the south-west corner in the house.
It is the treasure of the good man.
The support of the bad.
There is a traffic in speakers for fine words:
Persons of grave demeanour are accepted as gifts;
Even the bad let slip no opportunity to acquire them.
Therefore on the day of an Emperor's enthronement
Or at the installation of the three officers of State
Rather then send a team of horses, preceded by a disc of jade.
Better were it, as can be done without moving from one's seat, to send this Tao.
For what did the ancients say of this Tao, how did they prize it?
Did they not say of those that have it
Pursuing, they shall catch; pursued, they shall escape?
They thought it, indeed, most precious of all things under heaven.

(Lin)
Tao is the mysterious secret of the universe.
The good man's treasure.
And the bad man's refuge.
Beautiful sayings can be sold at the market.
Noble conduct can be presented as a gift.
Though there be bad people.
Why reject them?
Therefore on the crowning of an emperor.
On the appointment of the Three Ministers.
Rather than send tributes of jade and teams of four horses.
Send in the tribute of this Tao.
Wherein did the Ancients prize this Tao?
Did they not say, "to search for the guilty ones and pardon them"?
Therefore is (Tao) the treasure of the world.

(Cleary)
The Way is the pivot of all things:
the treasure of good people.
the safeguard of those who are not good.
Fine words can be sold,
honored acts can oppress people:
why should people who are not good abandon them?
Therefore to establish an emperor
and set up high officials,
one may have a great jewel
and drive a team of horses,
but that is not as good as advancing calmly on this Way.
Why did the ancients value this Way?
By it one can attain without long seeking
and escape from the faults one has;
therefore it is valued by the world.

(Feng&English)
Tao is the source of the ten thousand things.
It is the treasure of the good man, and the refuge of the bad.
Sweet words can buy honor:
Good deeds can gain respect.
If a man is bad, do not abandon him.
Therefore on the day the emperor is crowned.
Or the three officers of the state installed.
Do not send a gift of jade and a team of four horses.
But remain still and offer the Tao.
Why does everyone like the Tao so much at first?
Isn't it because you find what you seek and are forgiven when you sin?
Therefore this is the greatest treasure of the universe.
SIXTY-THREE

Do the Non-Ado.
Strive for the effortless.
Savour the savourless.
Exalt the low.
Multiply the few.
Requite injury with kindness.
Nip troubles in the bud.
Sow the great in the small.

Difficult things in the world
Can only be tackled when they are easy.
Big things in the world
Can only be achieved by attending to their small beginnings.

Thus, the Sage never has to grapple with big things,
Yet he alone is capable of achieving them!
He who promises lightly must be lacking in faith.
He who thinks everything is easy will end by finding everything difficult.

Therefore, the Sage, who regards everything as difficult,
Meets with no difficulties in the end.

(Lau)
Do that which consists in taking no action;
pursue that which is not meddlesome;
savour that which has no flavour.
Make the small big and the few many;
do good to him who has done you an injury.
Lay plans for the accomplishment of the difficult before it becomes difficult;
make something big by starting with it when small.

Difficult things in the world must needs have their beginnings in the easy;
big things must needs have their beginnings in the small.
Therefore it is because the sage never attempts to be great that he succeeds in becoming great.

One who makes promises rashly rarely keeps good faith;
one who is in the habit of considering things easy meets with frequent difficulties.
Therefore even the sage treats some things as difficult.
That is why in the end no difficulties can get the better of him.

(Chan)
Act without action.
Do without ado.
Taste without tasting.
Whether it is big or small, many or few, repay hatred with virtue.
Prepare for the difficult while it is still easy.
Deal with the big while it is still small.

Difficult undertakings have always started with what is easy,
And great undertakings have always started with what is small.
Therefore the sage never strives for the great,
And thereby the great is achieved.
He who makes rash promises surely lacks faith.
He who takes things too easily will surely encounter much difficulty.

For this reason even the sage regards things as difficult,
And therefore he encounters no difficulty.

(Henricks)
Act without acting;
Serve without concern for affairs;
Find flavor in what has no flavor.
Regard the small as large and the few as many.
And repay resentment with kindness.

Plan for the difficult while it is easy;
Act on the large while it's minute.
The most difficult things in the world begin as things that are easy;
The largest things in the world arise from the minute.

Therefore the Sage, to the end does not strive to do great.
And as a result, he is able to accomplish the great;
Those who too lightly agree will necessarily be trusted by few;
And those who regard many things as easy will necessarily end up with many difficulties.
Therefore, even the Sage regards things as difficult,
And as a result, in the end has no difficulty.
(Waley)
It acts without action,
does without doing,
finds flavour in what is flavourless.
Can make the small great and the few many.
'Requires injuries with good deeds.
Deals with the hard while it is still easy.
With the great while it is still small.'
In the governance of empire everything difficult must be dealt
with while it is still easy,
Everything great must be dealt
with while it is still small.
Therefore the Sage never has to
deal with the great;
and so achieves greatness.
But again 'Light assent inspires little confidence.
And "many easies" means many a hard.'
Therefore the Sage knows too how to make the easy difficult,
and by doing so avoid all difficulties!

(Lin)
Accomplish do-nothing.
Attend to no-affairs.
Taste the flavorless.
Whether it is big or small, many or few.
Require hatred with Virtue.
Deal with the difficult while yet it is easy;
Deal with the big while yet it is small.
The difficult (problems) of the world
Must be dealt with while they are yet easy;
The great (problems) of the world
Must be dealt with while they are yet small.
Therefore the Sage by never dealing the great (problems)
Accomplishes greatness.
He who lightly makes a promise Will find it often hard to keep his faith.
He who makes light of many things Will encounter many difficulties.
Hence even the Sage regards things as difficult.
And for that reason never meets with difficulties.

(Cleary)
Do nondoing.
strive for nonstriving.
savor the flavorless.
regard the small as important.
make much of little.
repay enmity with virtue;
plan for difficulty when it is still easy,
do the great while it is still small.
The most difficult things in the world
must be done while they are easy;
the greatest things in the world
must be done while they are small.
Because of this sages never do
great things;
that is why they can fulfill their greatness.
If you agree too easily, you'll be little trusted;
if you take it easy a lot, you'll have a lot of problems.
Therefore it is through difficulty
that sages end up without problems.

(Feng&English)
Practice non-action.
Work without doing.
Taste the tasteless.
Magnify the small, increase the few.
Reward bitterness with care.
See simplicity in the complicated.
Achieve greatness in little things.
In the universe the difficult things are done as if they are easy.
In the universe great acts are made up of small deeds.
The sage does not attempt anything very big.
And thus achieves greatness.
Easy promises make for little trust.
Taking things lightly results in great difficulty.
Because the sage always confronts difficulties.
He never experiences them.
What is at rest is easy to hold.
What is manifest is easily forestalled.
What is fragile is easily shattered.
What is small is easily scattered.
Tackle things before they have appeared.

Cultivate peace and order before confusion and disorder have set in.
A tree as big as a man's embrace springs from a tiny sprout.
A tower nine stories high begins with a heap of earth.
A journey of a thousand leagues starts where your feet stand.
He who fusses over anything spoils it.
He who grasps anything loses it.
The Sage fusses over nothing and therefore spoils nothing.
He grips at nothing and therefore loses nothing.

In handling affairs, people often spoil then just at the point of success.
With heedfulness in the beginning and patience at the end, nothing will be spoiled.
Therefore, the Sage desires to be desirless.
Sets no value on rare goods.
Learns to unlearn his learning.
And induces the masses to return from where they have overpassed.
He only helps all creatures to find their own nature.
But does not venture to lead them by the nose.

It is easy to maintain a situation while it is still secure;
It is easy to deal with a situation before symptoms develop;
It is easy to break a thing when it is yet brittle;
It is easy to dissolve a thing when it is yet minute.
Deal with a thing while it is still nothing;
Keep a thing in order before disorder sets in.
A tree that can fill the span of a man's arms
Grows from a downy tip;
A terrace nine storeys high
Rises from huddles of earth;
A journey of a thousand miles starts from beneath one's feet.
Whoever does anything to it will ruin it; whoever lays hold of it will lose it.
Therefore the sage, because he does nothing, never ruins anything; and, because he does not lay hold of anything, loses nothing.
In their enterprises the people always ruin them when on the verge of success.
Be as careful at the end as at the beginning
And there will be no ruined enterprises.
Therefore the sage desires no to desire
And does not value goods which are hard to come by:
Learns to be without learning
And makes good the mistakes of the multitude.
In order to help the myriad creatures to be natural and to refrain from daring to act.

What remains still is easy to hold.
What is not yet manifest is easy to plan for.
What is brittle is easy to crack.
What is minute is easy to scatter.
Deal with things before they appear.
Put things in order before disorder arises.
A tree as big as a man's embrace grows from a tiny shoot.
A tower of nine storeys begins with a heap of earth.
The journey of a thousand li starts from where one stands.
He who takes an action fails.
He who grasps things loses them.
For this reason the sage takes no action and therefore does not fail.
He grasps nothing and therefore he does not lose anything.
People in their handling of affairs often fail when they are about to succeed.
If one remains as careful at the end as he was at the beginning, there will be no failure.
Therefore the sage desires to have no desire.
He does not value rare treasures.
He learns to be unlearned, and return to what the multitude has missed (Tao).
Thus he supports all things in their natural state but does not take any action.
(Waley)
‘What stays still is easy to hold;
Before there has been an omen it is
easy to lay plans.
What is tender is easily torn.
What is minute is easy to scatter.’
Deal with things in their state of
not-yet-being.
Put them in order before they have
got into confusion.
For ‘the tree big as a man’s
embrace began as a tiny sprout,
The tower nine storeys high began
with a heap of earth,
The journey of a thousand leagues
began with what was under the feet’.
He who acts, harms; he who grabs,
lets slip.
Whereas the people of the world,
at their tasks,
Constantly spoil things when
within an ace of completing them.
‘Heed the end no less than the
beginning,’
And your work will not be spoiled.
Therefore the Sage wants only
things that are unwarned,
Sets no store by products difficult
to get.
And so teaches things untaught.
Turning all men back to the things
they have left behind.
That the ten thousand creatures
may be restored to their Self-so.
This he does; but dare not act.

(Lin)
That which lies still is easy to hold;
That which is not yet manifest is
easy to forestall;
That which is brittle (like ice) is
easy to melt;
That which is minute is easy to scatter.
Deal with a things before it is
there;
Check disorder before it is rife.
A tree with a full span’s girth
begins from a tiny sprout;
A nine-storied terrace begins with
a clod of earth.
A journey of a thousand li begins
at one’s feet.
He who acts, spoils;
He who grasps, lets slip.
Because the Sage does not act, he
does not spoil,
Because he does not grasp, he does
not let slip.
The affairs of men are often
spoiled within an ace of completion.
By being careful at the end as at the
beginning failure is averted.
Therefore the Sage desires to have
no desire.
And values not objects difficult to
obtain.
Leans that which is unlearned.
And restores what the multitude
have lost.
That he may assist in the course of
Nature
And not presume to interfere.

(Cleary)
What is at rest is easy to hold.
What has not shown up is easy to
take into account.
What is frail is easy to break.
What is vague is easy to dispel.
Do it before it exists;
govern it before there’s disorder.
The most massive tree grows from
a sprout;
the highest building rises from a
pile of earth;
a journey of a thousand miles
begins with a step.
Those who contrive spoil it;
those who cling lose it.
Thus sages contrive nothing,
and so spoil nothing.
They cling to nothing,
and so lose nothing.
Therefore people’s works are
always spoiled on the verge of
completion.
Be as careful of the end as of the
beginning,
and nothing will be spoiled.
Thus sages want to have no
wants;
you do not value goods hard to
get.
They learn not learning to
recover from people’s excesses,
thereby to assist the naturalness of
all beings,
without dreading to contrive.

(Feng&English)
Peace is easily maintained;
Trouble is easily overcome
before it starts.
The brittle is easily shattered;
The small is easily scattered.
Deal with it before it happens.
Set things in order before there is
confusion.
A tree as great as a man’s
embrace springs from a small
shoot;
A terrace nine stories high begins
with a pile of earth;
A journey of a thousand miles
starts under one’s feet.
He who acts defeats his own
purpose;
He who grasps loses.
The sage does not act, and so is
not defeated.
He does not grasp and therefore
does not lose.
People usually fail when they are
on the verge of success.
So give as much care to the end
as to the beginning;
Then there will be no failure.
Therefore the sage seeks freedom
from desire.
He does not collect precious
things.
He learns not to hold on to ideas.
He brings men back to what they
have lost.
He helps the ten thousand things
find their own nature,
But refrains from action.
(Wu)--SIXTY-FIVE
In the old days, those who were well versed in the practice of the Tao did not try to enlighten the people.
but rather to keep them in a state of simplicity.
For, why are the people hard to govern?
Because they are too clever!
Therefore, he who governs his state with cleverness is its malefactor;
but he who governs his state without resorting to cleverness is its benefactor.
To know these principles is to possess a rule and a measure.
To keep the rule and the measure constantly in your mind is what we call Mystical Virtue.
Deep and far-reaching is Mystical Virtue!
It leads all things to return, till they come back to Great Harmony!
(Lau)
Of old those who excelled in the pursuit of the way did not use it to enlighten the people but to hoodwink them.
The reason why the people are difficult to govern is that they are too clever.
Hence to rule a state by cleverness
Will be to the detriment of the state;
Not to rule a state by cleverness will be a boon to the state.
These two are models.
Always to know the models is known as mysterious virtue.
Mysterious virtue is profound and far-reaching.
But when things turn back it turns back with them.
Only then is complete conformity realized.
(Chan)
In ancient times those who practiced Tao well
Did not seek to enlighten the people, but to make them ignorant.
People are difficult to govern because they have too much knowledge.
Therefore he who rules the state through knowledge is a robber of the state;
He who rules a state not through knowledge is a blessing to the state.
One who knows these two things also (knows) the standard.
Always to know the standard is called profound and secret virtue.
Virtue becomes deep and far-reaching.
And with it all things return to their original natural state.
Then complete harmony will be reached.
(Henricks)
Those who practiced the Way in antiquity,
Did not use it to enlighten the people.
Rather, they used it to make them dumb.
Now the reason why people are difficult to rule is because of their knowledge;
As a result, to use knowledge to rule the state
Is thievery of the state;
To use ignorance to rule the state
Is kindness to the state.
One who constantly understands these two,
Also understands the principle.
To constantly understand the principle --
This is called Profound Virtue.
Profound Virtue is deep, is far-reaching.
And together with things it returns.
Thus we arrive at the Great Accord.
(Waley)
In the days of old those who practiced Tao with success did not, by means of it, enlighten the people.
but on the contrary sought to make them ignorant.
The more knowledge people have, the harder they are to rule.
Those who seek to rule by giving knowledge
Are like bandits preying on the land.
Those who rule without giving knowledge
Bring a stock of good fortune to the land.
To have understood the difference between these two things is to have a test and standard.
To be always able to apply this test and standard
Is called the mysterious 'power'.
The mysterious 'power', so deep-penetrating,
So far-reaching,
That can follow things back --
All the way back to the Great Concordance.

(Lin)
The Ancients who knew how to follow the Tao
Aimed not to enlighten the people.
But to keep them ignorant.
The reason it is difficult for the people to live in peace
Is because of too much knowledge.
Those who seek to rule a country by knowledge
Are the nation's curse.
Those who seek not to rule a country by knowledge
Are the nation's blessing.
Those who know these two (principles)
Also know the Ancient Standard.
And to know the Ancient Standard
Is called the Mystic Virtue.
When the Mystic Virtue becomes clear, far-reaching,
And things revert back (to their source),
Then an then only emerges the Grand Harmony.

(Cleary)
In ancient times,
good practitioners of the Way did not use it to enlighten the people.
but to make them unsophisticated.
When people are unruly, it is because of their sophistication.
So to govern a country by cunning
is to rob the country.
Not using cunning to govern a country
is good fortune for the country.
To know these two is also a model.
Being always aware of the model is called hidden virtue.
Hidden virtue is deep, far reaching,
in contrast to ordinary people.
Only when it is thus does it reach great accord.

(Feng & English)
In the beginning those who knew the Tao did not try to enlighten others.
But kept it hidden.
Why is it so hard to rule?
Because people are so clever.
Rulers who try to use cleverness.
Cheat the country.
Those who rule without cleverness
Are a blessing to the land.
These are the two alternatives.
Understanding these is Primal Virtue.
Primal Virtue is deep and far.
It leads all things back.
Toward the great oneness.
(Wu)—SIXTY-SIX
How does the sea become the king of all streams?
Because it is lower than they!
Hence it is the king of all streams.
Therefore, the Sage reigns over the people by humbling himself in speech:
And leads the people by putting himself behind.
Thus it is that when a Sage stands above the people, they do not feel the heaviness of his weight;
And when he stands in front of the people, they do not feel hurt.
Therefore all the world is glad to push him forward without getting tired of him.
Just because he strives with nobody,
Nobody can ever strive with him.

(Lau)
The reason why the River and the Sea are able to be king of the hundred valleys is that they excel in taking the lower position.
Hence they are able to be king of the hundred valleys.
Therefore, desiring to rule over people,
One must in one's words humble oneself before them;
And, desiring to lead people;
One must, in one's person, follow behind them.
Therefore the sage takes his place over the people yet is no burden;
takes his place ahead of the people yet causes no obstruction.
That is why the empire supports him joyfully and never tires of doing so.
It is because he does not contend that no one in the empire is in a position to contend with him.

(Chan)
The great rivers and seas are kings of all mountain streams
Because they skillfully stay below them.
That is why they can be their kings.
Therefore, in order to be the superior of the people,
One must, in the use of words, place himself below them.
And in order to be ahead of the people,
One must, in one's own person, follow them.
Therefore the sage places himself above the people and they do not feel his weight.
He places himself in front of them and the people do not harm him.
Therefore the world rejoices in praising him without getting tired of it.
It is precisely because he does not compete that the world cannot compete with him.

(Henricks)
The reason why rivers and oceans are able to be the kings of the one hundred valleys is that they are good at being below them.
For this reason they are able to be the kings of the one hundred valleys.
Therefore in the Sage's desire to be above the people,
He must in his speech be below them.
And in his desire to be at the front of the people,
He must in his person be behind them.
Thus he dwells above, yet the people do not regard him as heavy;
And he dwells in front, yet the people do not see him as posing a threat.
The whole world delights in his praise and never tires of him.
Is it not because he is not contentious,
That, as a result, no one in the world can contend with him?!
How did the great rivers and seas get their kingship over the hundred lesser streams?

Through the merit of being lower than they: that was how they got their kingship.

Therefore the Sage
In order to be above the people
Must speak as though he were lower than the people.
In order to guide them
He must put himself behind them.

Only thus can the Sage be on top and the people not be crushed by his weight.
Only thus can he guide, and the people not be led into harm.
Indeed in this way everything under heaven will be glad to be pushed by him and will not find his guidance irksome.
This he does by not striving; and because he does not strive, none can contend with him.

How did the great rivers and seas become the Lords of the Ravines?

By being good at keeping low.
That was how they became the Lords of the Ravines.
Therefore in order to be chief among the people,
One must speak like their inferiors.
In order to be foremost among the people,
One must walk behind them.
Thus it is that the Sage stays above.
And the people do not feel his weight;
Walks in front.
And the people do not wish him harm.

Then the people of the world are glad to uphold him forever.
Because he does not contend.
No one in the world can contend against him.

The reason why rivers and seas can be lords of the hundred valleys is that they lower themselves to them well;
therefore they can be lords of the hundred valleys.

So when sages wish to rise above people,
they lower themselves to them in their speech.
When they want to precede people,
they go after them in status.
So when sages rule,
people don't take it gravely.
And when sage are in the forefront,
people don't attack them.
Because they do not contend.

Why is the sea king of a hundred streams?
Because it lies below them.
Therefore it is the king of a hundred streams.

If the sage would guide the people, he must serve with humility.
If he would lead them, he must follow behind.
In this way when the sage rules, the people will not feel oppressed.
When he stands before them, they will not be harmed.
The whole world will support him and will not tire of him.
Because he does not compete.
He does not meet competition.
(Wu)--SIXTY-SEVEN

All the world says that my Tao is great, but seems queer, like nothing on earth.

But it is just because my Tao is great that it is like nothing on earth!

If it were like anything on earth, how small it would have been from the beginning!

I have Three Treasures, which I hold fast and watch over closely.

The first is Mercy.

The second is Frugality.

The third is Not Daring to Be First in the World.

Because I am merciful, therefore I can be brave.

Because I am frugal, therefore I can be generous.

Because I dare not be first, therefore I can be the chief of all vessels.

If a man wants to be brave without first being merciful, generous without first being frugal, a leader without first wishing to follow, he is only courting death!

Mercy alone can help you win a war.

Mercy alone can help you to defend your state.

For Heaven will come to the rescue of the merciful, and protect him with its Mercy.

(Lau)

The whole world says that my way is vast and resembles nothing.
It is because it is vast that it resembles nothing.
If it resembles anything, it would, long before now, have become small.
I have three treasures
Which I hold and cherish.
The first is known as compassion.
The second is known as frugality.
The third is known as not daring to take the lead in the empire;
Being compassionate one could afford to be courageous,
Being frugal one could afford to extend one's territory,
Not daring to take the lead in the empire one could afford to be lord over the vessels.

Now, to forsake compassion for courage, to forsake frugality for expansion, to forsake the rear for the lead, is sure to end in death.

Through compassion, one will triumph in attack and be impregnable in defense.

What heaven succours it protects with the gift of compassion.

(Chan)

All the world says that my Tao is great and does not seem to resemble the ordinary.
It is precisely because it is great that it does not resemble the ordinary.
If it did resemble, it would have been small for a long time.
I have three treasures.

Guard and keep them:
The first is deep love,
The second is frugality,
And the third is not to dare to be ahead of the world.
Because of deep love, one is courageous.
Because of frugality, one is generous.
Because of not daring to be ahead of the world, one becomes the leader of the world.

Now, to be courageous by forsaking deep love, to be generous by forsaking frugality, and to be ahead of the world by forsaking following behind -- this is fatal.

For deep love helps one to win in the case of attack.
And to be firm in the case of defense.
When Heaven is to save a person.

Heaven will protect him through deep love.

(Henricks)

The whole world says, I'm Great;
Great, yet unlike everyone else.
But it's precisely because I'm unlike everyone else, that I'm therefore able to be Great.

Were I like everyone else, for a long time now I'd have seemed insignificant and small.

I constantly have three treasures; Hold on to them and treasure them.

The first is compassion;
The second is frugality;
And the third is not presuming to be at the forefront in the world.

Now, it's because I'm compassionate that I therefore can be courageous;
And it's because I'm frugal that I therefore can be magnanimous;
And it's because I don't presume to be at the forefront in the world that I therefore can be the head of those with complete talent.

Now, if you abandon the compassion and yet try to be courageous, and if you abandon this frugality and yet try to be magnanimous, and if you abandon this staying behind and yet go to the fore, then you will die.

If with compassion you attack, then you'll win; if you defend, then you'll stand firm.

When Heaven's about to establish him, it's as though he surrounds him with the protective wall of compassion.
Every one under heaven says that our Way is greatly like folly. But it is just because it is great, that it seems like folly. As for things that do not seem like folly -- well, there can be no question about their smallness!

Here are my three treasures.

The first is pity;
the second, frugality;
the third: refusal to be 'foremost of all things under heaven'.

For only he that pities is truly able to be brave;
Only he that is frugal is truly able to be profuse.
Only he that refuses to be foremost of all things is truly able to be chief of all Ministers.

At present your bravery is not based on pity, nor your profusion on frugality, nor your vanguard on your rear; and this is death.

But pity cannot fight without conquering or guard without saving.

Heaven arms with pity whose whom it would not see destroyed.

All the world says: my teaching (Tao) greatly resembles folly. Because it is great; therefore it resembles folly.

If it did not resemble folly, it would have long ago become petty indeed!
I have Three Treasures;
Guard them and keep them safe:
The first is Love.
The second is. Never too much.
The third is. Never be the first in the world.
Through Love, one has no fear;
Through not doing too much, one has amplitude (of reserve power);
Through not presuming to be first in the world, one can develop one's talent and let it mature.
If one forsakes love and fearlessness, forsakes restraint and reserve power, forsakes following behind and rushes in front, he is dead!

For love is victorious in attack,
And invulnerable in defense.
Heaven arms with love
Those it would not see destroyed.

Everyone in the world say my Way is great, but it seems incomparable.
It is just because it is great that it seems incomparable:
when comparisons are long established it becomes trivialized.
I have three treasures that I keep and hold:
one is mercy,
the second is frugality,
the third is not presuming to be at the head of the world.
By reason of mercy, one can be brave.
By reason of frugality, one can be broad.
By not presuming to be at the head of the world, one can make your potential last.

Now it one were bold but had no mercy, if one were broad but were not frugal, if one went ahead without deference, one would die.
Use mercy in war, and you win; use it for defense, and you are secure.
Those whom heaven is going to save are those it guards with mercy.
(Wa) -- SIXTY-EIGHT
A good soldier is never aggressive;
A good fighter is never angry.
The best way of conquering an enemy
Is to win him over by not antagonizing him.
The best way of employing a man
Is to serve under him.
This is called the virtue of non-striving!
 This is called using the abilities of men!
 This is called being wedded to Heaven as of old!

(Lau) One who excels as a warrior does not appear formidable;
One who excels in fighting is never roused in anger;
One who excels in defeating his enemy does not join issue;
One who excels in employing others humbles himself before them.
This is known as the virtue of non-contention;
This is known as making use of the efforts of others;
This is known as matching the sublimity of heaven.

(Chan) A skillful leader of troops is not oppressive with his military strength.
A skillful fighter does not become angry.
A skillful conqueror does not compete with people.
One who is skillful in using men puts himself below them.
This is called the virtue of non-competing.
This is called the strength to use men.
This is called matching Heaven, the highest principle of old.

(Henricks) Therefore, the one who is good at being a warrior doesn't make a show of his might;
One who is good in battle doesn't get angry;
One who is good at defeating the enemy doesn't engage him.
And one who is good at using men places himself below them.
This is called the virtue of not competing;
This is called correctly using men;
This is called matching Heaven.
It's the high point of the past.
(Waley)
The best charioteers do not rush ahead;
The best fighters do not make displays of wrath.
The greatest conqueror wins without joining issue;
The best user of men acts as though he were their inferior.
This is called the power that comes of not contending.
Is called the capacity to use men,
The secret of being mated to heaven, to what was of old.

(Lin)
The brave soldier is not violent;
The good fighter does not lose his temper;
The great conqueror does not fight (on small issues);
The good user of men places himself below others.
-- This is the Virtue of not contending;
Is called the capacity to use men,
Is reaching to the height of being Mated to Heaven, to what was of old.

(Cleary)
Good warriors do not arm,
good fighters don't get mad,
good winners don't contend,
good employers serve their workers.
This is called the virtue of noncontention;
this is called mating with the supremely natural and pristine.

(Peng & English)
A good soldier is not violent.
A good fighter is not angry.
A good winner is not vengeful.
A good employer is humble.
This is known as the Virtue of not striving.
This is known as ability to deal with people.
This since ancient times has been known as the ultimate unity with heaven.
(Wu) SIXTY-NINE

The strategists have a saying:
I dare not be a host, but rather a guest;
I dare not advance an inch, but rather a foot.
This is called marching without moving.
Rolling up one's sleeves without baring one's arms,
Capturing the enemy without confronting him,
Holding a weapon that is invisible.
There is no greater calamity than to under-estimate the strength of your enemy.
For to under-estimate the strength of your enemy is to lose your treasure.
Therefore, when opposing troops meet in battle,
victory belongs to the grieving side.

(Lau)
The strategists have a saying,
I dare not play the host but play the guest,
I dare not advance an inch but retreat a foot instead.
This is known as marching forward when there is no road,
Rolling up one's sleeves when there is no arm,
Dragging one's adversary by force when there is no adversary,
And taking up arms when there are no arms.
There is no disaster greater than taking on an enemy too easily.
So doing nearly cost me my treasure.
Thus of two sides raising arms against each other,
it is the one that is sorrow stricken that wins.

(Chan)
The strategists say:
"I dare not take the offensive but I take the defensive;
I dare not advance an inch but I retreat a foot."
This means:
To march without formation,
To stretch one's arms without showing it,
To confront enemies without seeming to meet them,
To hold weapons without seeming to have them.
There is no greater disaster than to make light of the enemy.
Making light of the enemy will destroy my treasures.
Therefore when armies are mobilized and issues joined,
The man who is sorry over the fact will win.

(Henricks)
Those who use weapons have a saying which goes:
"I don't presume to act like the host, and instead play the part of the guest;
I don't advance an inch, but rather retreat a foot."
This is called moving forward without moving forward --
Rolling up one's sleeves without baring one's arms --
Grasping firmly without holding a weapon --
And enticing to fight when there's no opponent.
Of disasters, none is greater than thinking you have no rival.
To think you have no rival is to come close to losing my treasures.
Therefore, when weapons are raised and the opponents are fairly matched,
Then it's the one who feels grief that will win.
(Waley)
The strategists have a saying:
'When you doubt your ability to meet the enemy's attack, take the offensive yourself',
and 'If you doubt your ability to advance an inch, then retreat a foot'.
This latter is what we call to march without moving,
To roll the sleeve, but present no bare arm,
The hand that seems to hold, yet has no weapon in it,
A host that can confront, yet presents no battle-front.
Now the greatest of all calamities is to attack and find no enemy.
I can have no enemy only at the price of losing my treasure.
Therefore when armies are raised and issues joined it is he who does not delight in war that wins.

(Lin)
There is the maxim of military strategists;
I dare not be first to invade, but rather be invaded.
Dare no press forward an inch, but rather retreat a foot.
That is, to march without formations,
To roll up the sleeves,
To charge not in frontal attacks.
To arm without weapons.
There is no greater catastrophe than to underestimate the enemy.
To underestimate the enemy might entail the loss of my treasures.
It is the man of sorrow who wins.

(Cleary)
There are sayings on the use of arms:
"Let us not be aggressors, but defend."
"Let us not advance an inch, but retreat a foot."
This is called carrying out no action,
shaking no arm,
-facing no enemy,
-wielding no weapon.
No calamity is greater than underestimate the enemy.
If you underestimate opponents, you're close to losing your treasure.
So when opposing armies clash, the compassionate are the ones who win.

(Feng&English)
There is a saying among soldiers: I dare not make the first move but would rather play the guest; I dare not advance an inch but would rather withdraw a foot.
This is called marching without appearing to move,
Rolling up your sleeves without showing your arm,
Capturing the enemy without attacking.
Being armed without weapons.
There is no greater catastrophe than underestimating the enemy.
By underestimating the enemy, I almost lose what I value.
Therefore when the battle is joined,
The underdog will win.
My words are very easy to understand and very easy to practice:
But the world cannot understand them, nor practice them.
My words have an Ancestor.
My deeds have a Lord.
The people have no knowledge of this.
Therefore, they have no knowledge of me.
The fewer persons know me,
The nobler are they that follow me.
Therefore, the Sage wears coarse clothes.
While keeping the jade in his bosom.

My doctrines are very easy to understand and very easy to put into practice,
Yet the world can understand them or put them into practice.
Words have an ancestor and affairs have a sovereign.
It is because people are ignorant that they fail to understand me.
Those who understand me are few;
Those who imitate me are honoured.
Therefore the sage, while clad in homespun,
conceals on his person a priceless piece of jade.

My words are easy to understand,
And easy to put into practice.
Yet no one in the world can understand them,
And no one can put them into practice.
Now my words have an ancestor,
and my deeds have a lord,
And it is simply because people have no understanding of them,
that they therefore don't understand me.
But when those who understand me are few, then I'm of great value.
Therefore the Sage wears coarse woolen cloth, but inside it he holds on to jade.
(Waley)
My words are very easy to understand and very easy to practice.
Yet not one under heaven understands them;
no one puts them into practice.
But my words have an ancestry,
my deeds have a lord;
and it is precisely because men do not understand this that they are unable to understand me.
Few then understand me;
but it is upon this very fact that my value depends.
It is indeed in this sense that 'the Sage wears hair-cloth on top, but carries jade underneath his dress'.

(Lin)
My teachings are very easy to understand and very easy to practice,
But not one can understand them and no one can practice them.
In my words there is a principle.
In the affairs of men there is a system.
Because they know not these,
They also know me not.
Since there are few that know me,
Therefore I am distinguished.
Therefore the Sage wears a coarse cloth on top
And carries jade within his bosom.

(Cleary)
My sayings are very easy to recognize,
and very easy to apply.
But not one in the world can recognize them,
and no one can apply them.
Sayings have a source,
events have a leader.
It is only through ignorance that I am not known.
Those who know me are rare;
those who emulate me are noble.
This is why sages dress plainly,
and conceal what is precious.

(Peng & English)
My words are easy to understand and easy to perform.
Yet no man under heaven knows them or practices them.
My words have ancient beginnings.
My actions are disciplined.
Because men do not understand, they have no knowledge of me.
Those that know me are few;
Those that abuse me are honored.
Therefore the sage wears rough clothing and holds the jewel in his heart.
(Wu)--SEVENTY-ONE
To realize that our knowledge is ignorance.
This is a noble insight.
To regard our ignorance as knowledge.
This is mental sickness.
Only when we are sick of our sickness
Shall we cease to be sick.
The Sage is not sick, being sick of sickness;
This is the secret of health.

(Lau)
To know yet to think that one does not know is the best;
Not to know yet to think that one knows will lead to difficulty.
It is being alive to difficulty that one can avoid it.
The sage meets with no difficulty.
It is because he is alive to it that he meets with no difficulty.

(Chan)
To know that you do not know is best.
To pretend to know when you do not know is a disease.
Only when one recognizes this disease as a disease can one be free from the disease.
The sage is free from the disease.
Because he recognizes this disease to be disease, he is free from it.

(Henricks)
To know you don't know is best.
Not to know you don't know is a flaw.
Therefore, the Sage's not being flawed
Stems from his recognizing a flaw as a flaw.
Therefore, he is flawless.
(Waley)
To know when one does not know is best.
To think one knows when one does not know is a dire disease.
Only he who recognizes this disease as a disease
Can cure himself of the disease.
The Sage's way of curing disease
Also consists in making people recognize their diseases as diseases
and thus ceasing to be diseased.

(Lin)
Who knows that he does not know is the highest;
Who (pretends to) know what he does not know is sick-minded.
And who recognizes sick-mindedness as sick-mindedness is not sick-minded.
The Sage is not sick-minded.
Because he recognizes sick-mindedness and sick-mindedness.
Therefore he is not sick-minded.

(Cleary)
To know unconsciously is best.
To presume to know what you don't know is bad.
Only by recognizing the sickness of sickness is it possible not to be sick.
The sages' freedom from ills was from recognizing the sickness of sickness,
so they didn't suffer from sickness.

(Feng&English)
Knowing ignorance is strength.
Ignoring knowledge is sickness.
If one is sick of sickness, then one is not sick.
The sage is not sick because he is sick of sickness.
Therefore he is not sick.
(Wu)—SEVENTY-TWO
When the people no longer fear your power,
It is a sign that a greater power is coming.
Interfere not lightly with their dwelling,
Nor lay heavy burdens upon their livelihood.
Only when you cease to weary them,
They will cease to be wearied of you.
Therefore, the Sage knows himself,
But makes no show of himself;
Loves himself,
But does not exalt himself.
He prefers what is within to what is without.

(Lau)
When the people lack a proper sense of awe,
then some awful visitation will descend upon them.
Do not constrict their living space;
do not press down on their means of livelihood.
It is because you do not press down on them that they will not weary of the burden.
Hence the sage knows himself but does not display himself,
loves himself but does not exalt himself.
Therefore he discards the one and takes the other.

(Chan)
When the people do not fear of what is dreadful,
Then what is greatly dreadful will descend on them.
Do not reduce the living space of their dwellings.
Do not oppress their lives.
It is because you do not oppress them that they are not oppressed.
Therefore the sage knows himself but does not show himself.
He loves himself but does not exalt himself.
Therefore he rejects the one but accepts the other.

(Henricks)
When the people don't respect those in power,
than what is greatly feared is about to arrive.
Don't narrow the size of the places in which they live;
Don't oppress them in their means of livelihood.
It's simply because you do not oppress them, that they therefore will not be fed up.
Therefore the Sage knows himself but doesn't show himself;
He cherishes himself but doesn't value himself.
For this reason, he rejects that and takes this.
(Waley)
Never mind if the people are not intimidated by your authority.
A Mightier Authority will deal with them in the end.
Do not narrow their dwellings or harass their lives;
and for the very reason that you do not harass them,
they will cease to turn from you.
Therefore the Sage knows himself but does not show himself.
Knows his own value, but does not put himself on high.
Truly, he rejects that but takes this.

(Lin)
When people have no fear of force.
Then (as is the common practice) great force descends on them.
Despise not their dwellings.
Dislike not their progeny.
Because you do not dislike them.
You will not be disliked yourself.
Therefore the Sage knows himself, but does not show himself.
Loves himself, but does not exalt himself.
Therefore he rejects the one (force) and accepts the other (gentility).

(Cleary)
When the people are not awed by authority,
then great authority is attained.
Their homes are not small to them.
their livelihood not tiresome.
Just because they do not tire of it,
it is not tiresome to them.
Therefore sages know themselves but do not see themselves.
They take care of themselves but do not exalt themselves.
So they take one and leave the other.

(Feng&English)
When men lack a sense of awe, there will be a disaster.
Do not intrude in their homes.
Do not harass them at work.
If you do not interfere, they will not weary of you.
Therefore the sage knows himself but makes no show,
Has self-respect but is not arrogant.
He lets go of that and chooses this.
He who is brave in daring will be killed;
He who is brave in not daring will survive.
Of these two kinds of bravery, one is beneficial, while the other proves harmful.
Some things are detested by Heaven,
But who knows the reason?
Even the Sage is baffled by such a question.
It is Heaven's Way to conquer without striving,
To get responses without speaking,
To induce the people to come without summoning,
To act according to plans without haste.
Vast is Heaven's net:
Sparse-meshed it is, yet nothing can slip through it.

He who is fearless in being bold will meet with his death;
He who is fearless in being timid will stay alive.
Of the two, one leads to good, the others to harm.
Heaven hates what it hates,
Who knows the reason why?
Therefore even the sage treats some things as difficult.
The way of heaven excels in overcoming though it does not contend,
In responding though it does not speak,
In attracting though it does not summon,
In laying plans though it appears slack.
The net of heaven is cast wide.
Though the mesh is not fine, yet nothing ever slips through.

He who is brave in daring will be killed.
He who is brave in not daring will live.
Of these two, one is advantageous and one is harmful.
Who knows why Heaven dislikes what it dislikes?
Even the sage considers it difficult to question.
The Way of Heaven does not compete, and yet it skillfully achieves victory.
It does not speak, and yet it skillfully responds to things.
It comes to you without your invitation.
It is not anxious about thing and yet it plans well.
Heaven's net is indeed vast.
Though its meshes are wide, it misses nothing.

If you're brave in being daring, you'll be killed;
If you're brave in not being daring, you'll live.
With these two things, in one case there's profit, in the other there's harm.
The things Heaven hates -- who knows why?
The Way of Heaven is not to fight yet to be good at winning --
Not to speak yet skillfully respond --
No one summons it, yet it comes on its own --
To be at ease yet carefully plan.
Heaven's net is large and vast;
Its mesh may be coarse yet nothing slips through.
(Waley)
He whose braveness lies in
daring, slays.
He whose braveness lies in not
daring, gives life.
Of these two, either may be
profitable or unprofitable.
But 'Heaven hates what it hates:
None can know the reason why.'
Therefore the Sage, too,
disallows it.
For it is the way of Heaven not
to strive but none the less to
conquer.
Not to speak, but none the less to
get an answer,
Not to beckon; yet things come
to it of themselves.
Heaven is like one who says
little, yet none the less has laid his
plans.
Heaven's net is wide;
Coarse are the meshes, yet
nothing slips through.

(Lin)
Who is brave in daring (you) kill.
Who is brave in not daring (you)
let live.
In these two.
There is some advantage and
some disadvantage.
(Even if) Heaven dislikes certain
people.
Who would know (who are to be
killed and) why?
Therefore even the Sage regards
it as a difficult question.
Heaven's Way (Tao) is good at
conquest without strife.
Rewarding (vice and virtue)
without words,
Making its appearance without
call,
Achieving result without obvious
design.
The Heaven's Net is broad and
wide.
With big meshes, yet letting
nothing slip through.

(Cleary)
Boldness in daring means killing;
boldness in not daring means life.
These two may help and may
harm.
Who knows the reason for what
heaven dislikes?
This is why even sages find it
hard for them.
The Way of heaven wins well
without contest;
responds without speech,
comes of itself uncalled,
relaxed yet very resourceful.
The net of heaven is vast;
the holes are large but don't let
slip.

(Feng&English)
A brave and passionate man will
kill or be killed.
A brave and calm man will
always preserve life.
Of these two which is good and
which is harmful?
Some things are not favored by
heaven.
Who know why?
Even the sage is unsure of this.
The Tao of heaven does not
strive, and yet it overcomes.
It does not speak, and yet is
answered.
It does not ask, yet is supplied
with all its needs.
It seems to have no aim and yet
its purpose is fulfilled.
Heaven's net casts wide.
Though its meshes are coarse,
nothing slips through.
(Waley)
The people are not frightened of death.
What then is the use of trying to intimidate them with the death-penalty?
And even supposing people were generally frightened of death and did not regard it as an everyday thing,
which of you would dare seize them and slay them?
There is the Lord of Slaughter always ready for the task,
and to do it in his stead is like thrusting oneself into the master-carpenter's place and doing his chipping for him.
Now he who tries to do the master-carpenter's chipping for him is lucky if he does not cut his hand.

(Lin)
The people are not afraid of death.
Why threaten them with death?
Supposing that the people are afraid of death.
And we can seize and kill the unrighteous.
Who would dare to do so?
Often it happens that the executioner is killed.
And to take the place of the executioner
Is like handling the hatchet for the master carpenter.
He who handles the hatchet for the master carpenter
Seldom escapes injury to his hands.

(Cleary)
If people usually don't fear death.
how can death be used to scare them?
If people are made to fear death.
and you can catch and kill them when they act oddly.
who would dare?
There are always executioners.
And to kill in place of an executioner
is taking the place of a master carver.
Those who take place of a master carver rarely avoid cutting their own hands.

(Feng & English)
If men are not afraid to die.
It is no avail to threaten them with death.
If men live in constant fear of dying.
And if breaking the law means that a man will be killed.
Who will dare to break the law?
There is always an official executioner.
I you try to take his place.
It is like trying to be a master carpenter and cutting wood.
If you try to cut wood like a master carpenter.
you will only hurt your hand.
(Wu)—SEVENTY-FIVE
Why are the people starving? Because those above them are taxing them too heavily.
That is why they are starving.
Why are the people hard to manage?
Because those above them are fussy and have private ends to serve.
That is why they are hard to manage.
Why do the people make light of death?
Because those above them make too much of life.
That is why they make light of death.
The people have simply nothing to live upon!
They know better than to value such a life!

(Lau)
The people are hungry:
It is because those in authority eat up too much in taxes
That the people are hungry.
The people are difficult to govern:
It is because those in authority are too fond of action
That the people are difficult to govern.
The people treat death lightly:
It is because the people set too much store by life
That they treat death lightly.
It is just because one has no use for life that one is wiser than the man who values life.

(Chan)
The people starve because the ruler eats too much tax-grain.
Therefore they starve.
They are difficult to rule because their ruler does too many things.
Therefore they are difficult to rule.
The people take death lightly because their ruler strives for life too vigorously.
Therefore they take death lightly.
It is only those who do not seek after life that excel in making life valuable.

(Henricks)
The reason why people starve.
Is because they take so much in tax-grain.
Therefore they starve.
The reason why the common people cannot be ruled.
Is because their superiors have their reasons for acting.
Therefore they cannot be ruled.
The reason why people take death lightly.
Is because they so avidly seek after life.
Therefore they take death lightly.
Only those who do not act for the purpose of living --
Only these are superior to those who value life.
Waley
The people starve because those above them eat too much tax-grain.
That is the only reason why they starve.
The people are difficult to keep in order because those above them interfere.
That is the only reason why they are so difficult to keep in order.
The people attach no importance to death, because those above them are so grossly absorbed in the pursuit of life.
That is why they attach no importance to death.
And indeed, in that their hearts are so little set on life they are superior to those who set store by life.

Lin
When people are hungry.
It is because their rulers eat too much tax-grain.
Therefore the unruliness of hungry people
Is due to the interference of their rulers.
That is why they are unruly.
The people are not afraid of death.
Because they are anxious to make a living.
That is why they are not afraid of death.
It is those who interfere not with their living
That are wise in exalting life.

Cleary
When people are starving,
it is because their governments take too much,
causing them to starve.
When people are hard to control,
it is because of the contrivances of their governments,
which make them hard to control.
When people slight death,
it is because of the earnestness with which they seek life;
that makes them slight death.
Only those who do not contrive to live are wise in valuing life.

Feng & English
Why are the people starving?
Because the rulers eat up the money in taxes.
Therefore the people are starving.
Why are the people rebellious?
Because the rulers interfere too much.
Therefore they are rebellious.
Why do the people think so little of death?
Because the rulers demand too much of life.
Therefore the people take death lightly.
Having little to live on, one knows better than to value life too much.
When a man is living, he is soft and supple.
When he is dead, he becomes hard and rigid.
When a plant is living, it is soft and tender.
When it is dead, it becomes withered and dry.

Hence, the hard and rigid belongs to the company of the dead:
The soft and supple belongs to the company of the living.

Therefore, a mighty army tends to fall by its own weight.
Just as dry wood is ready for the axe,
The mighty and great will be laid low;
The humble and weak will be exalted.

A man is supple and weak when living, but hard and stiff when dead.
Grass and trees are pliant and fragile when living, but dried and shriveled when dead.
Thus the hard and the strong are the comradies of death;
the supple and the weak are the comradies of life.
Therefore a weapon that is strong will not vanquish;
A tree that is strong will suffer the axe.
The strong and big takes the lower position,
The supple and weak takes the higher position.

When a man is born, he is tender and weak.
At death, he is stiff and hard.
All things, the grass as well as trees, are tender and supple when alive.
When dead, they are withered and dried.
Therefore the stiff and hard are companions of death.
The tender and the weak are companions of life.
Therefore if the army is strong, it will not win.
If a tree is stiff, it will break.
The strong and the great are inferior,
while the tender and the weak are superior.

When people are born, they're supple and soft;
When they die, they end up stretched out firm and rigid.
When the ten thousand things and grasses and trees are alive, they're supple and pliant;
When they're dead, they're withered and dried out.
Therefore we say that the firm and rigid are companions of death.
While the supple, the soft, the weak, and the delicate are companions of life.
If a soldier is rigid, he won't win;
If a tree is rigid, it will come to its end.
Rigidity and power occupy the inferior position;
Suppleness, softness, weakness, and delicateness occupy the superior position.
When he is born, man is soft and weak.
In death he becomes stiff and hard.
The ten thousand creatures and all plants and trees while they are alive are supple and soft.
but when they are dead they become brittle and dry.
Truly, what is stiff and hard is 'a companion of death';
what is soft and weak is a 'companion of life'.
Therefore 'the weapon that is hard will be broken,'
the tree that has the hardest wood will be cut down.'
Truly, the hard and mighty are cast down;
the soft and weak set on high.

When man is born, he is tender and weak:
At death, he is hard and stiff.
When things and plants are alive, they are soft and supple;
When they are dead, they are brittle and cry.
Therefore hardness and stiffness are the companions of death.
And softness and gentleness are the companions of life.
Therefore when an army is headstrong, it will lose in battle.
When a tree is hard, it will be cut down.
The big and strong belong underneath.
The gentle and weak belong at the top.

When people are born they are supple,
and when they die they are stiff.
When trees are born they are tender,
and when they die they are brittle.
Stiffness is thus a companion of death.
Flexibility a companion of life.
So when an army is strong, it does not prevail.
When a tree is strong, it is cut for use.
So the stiff and the strong are below,
the supple and yielding on top.

A man is born gentle and weak.
At his death he is hard and stiff.
Green plants are tender and filled with sap.
At their death they are withered and dry.
Therefore the stiff and unbending is the discipline of death.
The gentle and yielding is the discipline of life.
Thus an army without flexibility never wins a battle.
A tree that is unbending is easily broken.
The hard and strong will fall.
The soft and weak will overcome.
(Wu)--SEVENTY-SEVEN

Perhaps the Way of Heaven may be likened to the stretching of a composite bow!

The upper part is depressed, while the lower is raised.
If the bow-string is too long, it is cut short:
if too short, it is added to.
The Way of Heaven diminishes the more-than-enough to supply the less-than-enough.
The way of man is different: it takes from the less-than-enough to swell the more-than-enough.
Who except a man of the Tao can put his superabundant riches to the service of the world?
Therefore, the Sage does his work without setting any store by it,
accomplishes his task without dwelling upon it.
He does not want his merits to be seen.

(Lau)
Is not the way of heaven like the stretching of a bow?
The high it presses down.
The low it lifts up.
The excessive it takes from.
The deficient it gives to.
It is the way of heaven to take from what has in excess on order to make good what is deficient.
The way of man is otherwise.
It takes from those who are in want in order to offer this to those who already have more than enough.
Who is there that can take what he himself has in excess and offer this to the empire?
Only he who has the way.
Therefore the sage benefits them yet exacts no gratitude.
Accomplishes his task yet lays claim to no merit.
Is this not because he does not wish to be considered a better man than others?

(Chan)
Heaven's Way is indeed like the bending of a bow.
When (the string) is high, bring it down.
When it is low, raise it up.
When it is excessive, reduce it.
When it is insufficient, supplement it.
The Way of Heaven reduces whatever is excessive and supplements whatever is insufficient.
The way of man is different.
It reduces the insufficient to offer to the excessive.
Who is able to have excess to offer the world?
Only the man of Tao.
Therefore the sage acts, but does not rely on his own ability.
He accomplishes his task, but does not claim credit for it.
He has no desire to display his excellence.

(Henricks)
The Way of Heaven is like the flexing of a bow.
The high it presses down; the low it raises up.
From those with a surplus it takes away;
to those without enough it adds on.
Therefore the Way of Heaven --
Is to reduce the excessive and increase the insufficient;
The Way of Man --
Is to reduce the insufficient and offer more to the excessive.
Now, who is able to have a surplus and use it to offer to Heaven?
Clearly, it's only the one who possesses the Way.
Therefore the Sage --
Takes actions but does not possess them;
Accomplishes his tasks but does not dwell on them.
Like this, is his desire not to make a display of his worthiness.
(Waley)
Heaven's way is like the bending of a bow.
When a bow is bent the top comes down and the bottom-end comes up.
So too does Heaven take away from those who have too much and give to those that have not enough.
But if it is Heaven's way to take from those that have too much and give to those who have not enough, this is far from being man's way.
He takes away from those that have not enough in order to make offering to those who already have too much.
One there is and one only, so rich that he can afford to make offerings to all under heaven.
Who is this?
It is the possessor of Tao.
If, then, the Sage 'though he controls does not lean, and when he has achieved his aim does not linger', it is because he does not wish to reveal himself as better than others.

(Lin)
The Tao of Heaven.
Is it not like the bending of a bow?
The top comes down and the bottom-end goes up.
The extra length is shortened, the insufficient (width) is expanded.
It is the Way of Heaven to take away from those that have too much
And give to those than have not enough.
Not so with man's way:
He takes away from those that have not
And gives it as tribute to those that have too much.
Who can have enough and to spare to give to the entire world?
Only the man of Tao.
Therefore the Sage acts, but does not possess,
Accomplishes but lays claim to no credit,
Because he has no wish to seem superior.

(Cleary)
The Way of heaven is like drawing a bow:
the high is lowered, the low is raised:
excess is reduced, need is fulfilled.
The Way of heaven reduces excess and fills need,
but the way of man is not so: they strip the needy to serve those who have too much.

(Feng&English)
The Tao of heaven is like the bending of a bow.
The high is lowered, and the low is raised.
If the string is too long, it is shortened;
If there is not enough, it is made longer.
The Tao of heaven is to take from those who have too much and give to those who do not have enough.
Man's way is different.
He takes from those who do not have enough to give to those who already have too much.
What man has more than enough and gives it to the world?
Only the man of Tao.
Therefore the sage works without recognition.
He achieves what has to be done without dwelling on it.
He does not try to show his knowledge.
Nothing in the world is softer and weaker than water; but, for attacking the hard and strong, there is nothing like it. For nothing can take its place. That the weak overcomes the strong, and the soft overcomes the hard.

This is something known by all, but practiced by none. Therefore, the Sage says:

To receive the dirt of a country is to be the lord of its soil-shrines. To bear the calamities of a country is to be the prince of the world.

Indeed, truth sounds like its opposite!

There is nothing softer and weaker than water. And yet there is nothing better for attacking hard and strong things. For this reason there is no substitute for it. All the world knows that the weak overcomes the strong and the soft overcomes the hard. But none can practice it. Therefore the sage says:

He who suffers disgrace for his country Is called the lord of the land. He who takes upon himself the country's misfortunes Becomes the king of the empire. Straightforward words seem to be their opposite.

In the whole world, nothing is softer and weaker than water. And yet for attacking the hard and strong, nothing can beat it. Because there is nothing you can use to replace it. That water can defeat the unyielding --- That the weak can defeat the strong --- There is no one in the world who doesn't know it, And yet there is no one who can put it into practice. For this reason, the words of the Sage say:

To take on yourself the disgrace of the state --- this is called being the lord of the altars of earth and grain. To assume responsibility for all ill-omened events in the state --- this is called being the king of the world. Correct words seem to say the reverse of what you expect them to say.
(Waley)
Nothing under heaven is softer or more yielding than water;
but when it attacks things hard and resistant there is none of them that can prevail.
For they can find no way of altering it.
That the yielding conquers the resistant and the soft conquers the hard is a fact known by all men,
yet utilized by none.
Yet it is in reference to this that the Sage said 'Only he who has accepted the dirt of the country can be lord of its soil-shrines;
only he who takes upon himself the evils of the country can become a king among those what dwell under heaven.'
Straight words seem crooked.

(Lin)
There is nothing weaker than water
But none is superior to it in overcoming the hard.
For which there is no substitute.
That weakness overcomes strength
And gentleness overcomes rigidity.
No one does not know;
No one can put into practice.
Therefore the Sage says:
"Who receives unto himself the calumny of the world
Is the preserver of the state.
Who bears himself the sins of the world
Is the king of the world."
Straight words seem crooked.

(Cleary)
Nothing in the world is more flexible and yielding than water.
Yet when it attacks the firm and the strong.
none can withstand it.
because they have no why to change it.
So the flexible overcome the adamant,
the yielding overcome the forceful.
Everyone knows this,
but no one can do it.
This is why sages say
those who can take on the disgrace of nations
are leaders of lands;
those who can take on the misfortune of nations
are rulers of the world.
True sayings seem paradoxical.

(Feng&English)
Under heaven nothing is more soft and yielding than water.
Yet for attacking the solid and strong, nothing is better.
It has no equal.
The weak can overcome the strong;
The supple can overcome the stiff.
Under heaven everyone knows this.
Yet no one puts it into practice.
Therefore the sage says:
He who takes upon himself the humiliation of the people is fit to rule them.
He who takes upon himself the country's disasters deserves to be king of the universe.
The truth often sounds paradoxical.
When a great wound is healed,
There will still remain a scar.
Can this be a desirable state of affairs?
Therefore, the Sage, holding the
two-hand tally,
Performs his part of the
cohenent.
But lays no claim upon others.
The virtuous attends to his
duties;
The virtueless knows only to levy
duties upon the people.
The Way of Heaven has no
private affections.
But always accords with the
good.

When peace is made between
great enemies,
Some enmity is bound to remain
undispelled.
How can this be considered
perfect?
Therefore the sage takes the left-
hand tally, but exacts no payment
from the people.
The man of virtue takes charge
of the tally;
The man of no virtue takes
charge of exaction.
It is the way of heaven to show
no favoritism.
It is for ever on the side of the
good man.

To patch up great hatred is
surely to leave some hatred behind.
How can this be regarded as
good?
Therefore the sage keeps the left-
hand portion (obligation) of a
contract
And does not blame the other
party.
Virtuous people attend to their
left-hand portions,
While those without virtue attend
to other people's mistakes.
"The Way of Heaven has no
favorites.
It is always with the good man."

To make peace where there has
been great resentment,
there is bound to be resentment
left over.
How could this be regarded as
good?
Therefore the Sage holds the
right tally yet makes no demands
of others.
For this reason, those who have
virtue are in charge of the tally;
Those without virtue are in
charge of the taxes.
The Way of Heaven has no
favorites,
It's always with the good man.
(Waley)
To aly the main discontent, but
only in a manner that will certainly
produce further discontent; can
hardly be called successful.
Therefore the Sage behaves like
the holder of the left-hand tally,
who stays where he is and does
not go round making claims on
people.
For he who has the 'power' of
Tao is the Grand Almoner;
he who has not the 'power' is the
Grand Perquisitor.
'It is Heaven's way, without
distinction of persons, to keep the
good perpetually supplied.'

(Lin)
Patching up a great hatred is sure
to leave some hatred behind.
How can this be regarded as
satisfactory?
Therefore the Sage holds the left
tally,
And does not put the guilt on the
other party.
The virtuous man is for patching
up;
The vicious is for fixing guilt.
But 'the way of Heaven is
impartial
It sides with only with the good
man.'

(Cleary)
When you harmonize bitter
enemies,
yet resentment is sure to linger.
how can this be called good?
Therefore sages keep their faith
and do not pressure others.
So the virtuous sees to their
promises,
while the virtueless look after
precedents.
The Way of heaven is
impartial;
it is always with good people.

(Feng&English)
After a bitter quarrel, some
resentment must remain.
What can one do about it?
Therefore the sage keeps his half
of the bargain
But does not exact his due.
A man of Virtue performs his
part,
But a man without Virtue
requires others to fulfill their
obligations.
The Tao of heaven is impartial.
It stays with good men all the
time.
Lau
Reduce the size and population of the state.
Ensure that even though the people have tools of war for a troop or a battalion they will not use them;
and also that they will be reluctant to move to distant places because they look on death as no light matter.
Even when they have ships and carts, they will have no use for them;
and even when they have armour and weapons, they will have no occasion to make a show of them.
Bring it about that the people will return to the use of the knotted rope.
Will find relish in their food
And beauty in their clothes.
Will be content in their abode
And happy in the way they live.
Though adjoining states are within sight of one another, and the sound of dogs barking and crows crowing in one state can be heard in another,
yet the people of one state will grow old and die without having had any dealing with those of another.

Chan
Let there be a small country with few people.
Let there be ten times and a hundred times as many utensils
But let them not be used.
Let the people value their lives highly and not migrate far.
Even if there are ships and carriages, none will ride in them.
Even if there are armor and weapons, none will display them.
Let the people again knot cords and use them (in place of writing).
Let them relish their food, beautify their clothing, be content with their homes, and delight in their customs.
Though neighboring communities overlook one another and the crowing of cocks and barking of dogs can be heard,
yet the people there may grow old and die without ever visiting one another.

Henricks
Let the states be small and the people few --
Bring it about that there are weapons for "tens" and "hundreds," yet let no one use them;
Have the people regard death gravely and put migrating far from their minds.
Though they might have boats and carriages, no one will ride them;
Though they might have armour and spears, no one will display them.
Have the people return to knotting cords and using them.
They will relish their food, regard their clothing as beautiful,
Delight in their customs,
And feel safe and secure in their homes.
Neighboring states might overlook one another,
And the sounds of chickens and dogs might be overheard.
Yet the people will arrive at old age and death with no comings and goings between them.
(Waley)

Given a small country with few inhabitants,
he could bring it about that
though there should be among the
people contrivances requiring ten
times, a hundred times less labour,
they would not use them.

He could bring it about that the
people would be ready to lay down
their lives and lay them down
again in defense of their homes,
rather than emigrate.

There might still be boats and
carrriages, but no one would go in
them;
there might still be weapons of
war but no one would drill with
them.

He could bring it about that 'the
people should have no use for any
form of writing save knotted ropes,
should be contented with their
food, pleased with their clothing,
satisfied with their homes, should
take pleasure in their rustic tasks.

The next place might be so near
at hand that one could hear the
cocks crowing in it, the dogs
barking;
but the people would grow old
and die without ever having been
there'.

(Lin)

(Let there be) a small country
with a small population.
Where the supply of goods are
tenfold or hundredfold, more than
they can use.

Let the people value their lives
and not migrate far.
Though there be boats and
carrriages,
None be there to ride them.
Though there be armor and
weapons,
No occasion to display them.
Let the people again tie ropes for
reckoning,
Let them enjoy their food,
Beautify their clothing,
Be satisfied with their homes,
Delight in their customs.
The neighboring settlements
overlook one another.
So that they can hear the barking
of dogs and crowing of cocks of
their neighbors.
And the people till the end of
their days shall never have been
outside their country.

(Cleary)

A small state has few people.
It has the people keep arms but
not use them.
It has them regard death gravely
and not go on distant campaigns.
Even if they have vehicles, they
have nowhere to drive them.
Even if they have weapons, they
have nowhere to use them.
It has the people go back to
simple techniques,
relish their food,
like their clothes,
be comfortable in their ways,
and enjoy their work.
Neighboring state may be so
close they can hear each other's
dogs and roosters,
but they make it so that the
people have never gone back and
forth.

(Feng & English)

A small country has fewer
people.
Though there are machines that
can work ten to a hundred times
faster than man, they are not
needed.
The people take death seriously
and do not travel far.
Though they have boats and
carrriages, no one uses them.
Though they have armor and
weapons, no one displays them.
Men return to the knotting of
rope in place of writing.
Their food is plain and good.
their clothes fine but simple, their
homes secure;
They are happy in their ways.
Though they live within sight of
their neighbors.
And crowing cocks and barking
dogs are heard across the way.
Yet they leave each other in
peace while they grow old and die.
(Wu)--EIGHTY-ONE
Sincere words are not sweet.
Sweet words are not sincere.
Good men are not argumentative.
The argumentative are not good.
The wise are not erudite.
The erudite are not wise.
The Sage does not take to hoarding.
The more he lives for others, the fuller his life.
The more he gives, the more he abounds.
The Way of Heaven is to benefit, not to harm.
The Way of the Sage is to do his duty, not strive with anyone.

(Lau)
Truthful words are not beautiful;
beautiful words are not truthful.
Good words are not persuasive;
persuasive words are not good.
He who knows has no wide learning;
he who has wide learning does not know.
The sage does not hoard.
Having bestowed all he has on others, he is richer still.
The way of heaven benefits and does not harm;
the way of the sage is bountiful and does not contend.

(Chan)
True words are not beautiful;
Beautiful words are not true.
A good man does not argue;
He who argues is not a good man.
A wise man has not extensive knowledge;
He who has extensive knowledge is not a wise man.
The sage does not accumulate for himself.
The more he uses for others, the more he has himself.
The more he gives to others, the more he possesses of his own.
The Way of Heaven is to benefit others and not to injure.
The way of the sage is to act but not compete.

(Henricks)
Sincere words are not showy;
Showy words are not sincere.
Those who know are not "widely learned";
Those "widely learned" do not know.
The good do not have a lot;
Those with a lot are not good.
The Sage accumulates nothing.
Having used what he had for others,
He has even more.
Having given what he had to others,
What he has is even greater.
Therefore, the Way of Heaven is to benefit and not cause harm;
The Way of Man is to act on behalf of others and not compete with them.
(Waley)
True words are not fine sounding;
Fine-sounding words are not true.
The good man does not prove by argument:
And he who proves by argument is not good.
True wisdom is different from much learning:
Much learning makes little wisdom.
The Sage has no need to hoard:
When his own last scrap has been used up on behalf of others,
Lo, he has more than before!
When his own last scrap has been used up giving to others,
Lo, his stock is even greater than before!
For Heaven's way is to sharpen without cutting,
And the Sage's way is to act without striving.

(Lin)
True words are not fine-sounding;
Fine-sounding words are not true.
A good man does not argue;
He who argues is not a good man.
The wise one does not know many things;
He who knows many things is not wise.
The Sage does not accumulate (for himself):
He lives for other people,
And grows richer himself;
He gives to other people.
And has greater abundance.
The Tao of Heaven Blesses but does not harm.
The Way of the Sage Accomplishes, but does not contend.

(Cleary)
True words are not beautiful.
Beautiful words are not true.
The good are not argumentative.
the argumentative are not good.
Knowers do not generalize.
Generalists do not know.
Sages do not accumulate anything
but give everything to others.
having more the more they give.
The Way of heaven helps and does not harm.
The Way for humans is to act without contention.

(Feng&English)
Truthful words are not beautiful.
Beautiful words are not truthful.
Good men do not argue.
Those who argue are not good.
Those who know are not learned.
The learned do not know.
The sage never tries to store things up.
The more he does for others, the more he has.
The more he gives to others, the greater his abundance.
The Tao of heaven is pointed but does no harm.
The Tao if the sage is work without effort.