

# 《道德经》中英对照（林语堂）

## 一章

道，可道，非恒道。名，可名，非恒名。无名，天地之始；有名，万物之母。故常无欲，以观其妙；常有欲，以观其徼。此两者同出而异名，同谓之玄。玄之又玄，众妙之门。

The Tao that can be told of  
Is not the Absolute Tao;  
The Names that can be given  
Are not 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 forms.  
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.

## 二章

天下皆知美之为美，斯恶已；皆知善之为善，斯不善矣。有无相生，难易相成，长短相形，高下相盈，音声相和，前后相随，恒也。是以圣人处无为之事，行不言之教，万物作而弗始，生而弗有，为而弗恃，功成而弗居。夫唯弗居，是以不去。

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 voice interdepend in harmony;

Front and behind interdepend in company.

Therefore the Sage:

Manages 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.

### 三章

不尚贤，使民不争；不贵难得之货，使民不为盗；不见可欲，使民心不乱。是以圣人之治，虚其心，实其腹；弱其志，强其骨。常使民无知无欲。使夫知不敢弗为而已，则无不治。

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 site 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 innocent of knowledge and desires.  
And the cunning ones shall not presume to interfere.  
By action without deeds  
May all live in peace.

#### 四章

道冲，而用之或不盈。渊兮，似万物之宗。挫其锐，解其纷，和其光，同其尘。湛兮，似或存。吾不知谁之子，象帝之先。

Tao is a hollow vessel,  
And its use is inexhaustible!  
Fathomless!  
Like the fountain head of all things,  
Its sharp edges rounded off,  
Its tangles untied,  
Its light tempered,  
Its turmoil submerged,  
Yet dark like deep water it seems to remain.  
I do not know whose Son it is,  
An image of what existed before God.

## 五章

天地不仁，以万物为刍狗；圣人不仁，以百姓为刍狗。天地之间，其犹橐籥乎？虚而不屈，动而愈出。多闻数穷，不如守中。

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.

## 六章

谷神不死，是谓玄牝。玄牝之门，是谓天地根。绵绵若存，用之不勤。

The Spirit of the Valley never dies.

It is called 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.

## 七章

天长地久。天地所以能长且久者，以其不自生，故能长生。是以圣人后其身而身先，外其身而身存。不以其无私邪？故能成其私。

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 is realized?

## 八章

上善若水。水善利万物而不争，居众人之所恶，故几于道。居善地，心善渊，与善仁，言善信，政善治，事善能，动善时。夫唯不争，故无尤。

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 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.



## 九章

持而盈之，不如其已。揣而锐之，不可长保。金玉满堂，莫之能守。富贵而骄，自遗其咎。功遂身退，天下之道。

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 seeds of one's own downfall.  
Retire when your work is done,  
Such is Heaven's way.

## 十章

载营魄抱一，能无离乎？专气致柔，能如婴儿乎？修除玄览，能无疵乎？爱民治国，能无智乎？天门开阖，能为雌乎？明白四达，能无知乎？生之、畜之，生而不有，长而不宰。是为玄德。

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 new-born 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 Gate of Heaven,  
Can you play the part of the Female?  
In comprehending all knowledge,  
Can you renounce the mind?

## 十一章

三十辐共一毂，当其无，有车之用。埴埴以为器，当其无，有器之用。凿户牖以为室，当其无，有室之用。故有之以为利，无之以为用。

Thirty spokes unite around the nave;

From their not-being (loss of their individuality)

Arises the utility of the wheel.

Mold 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.

## 十二章

五色令人目盲；五音令人耳聋；五味令人口爽；驰骋畋猎，令人心发狂；难得之货，令人行妨。是以圣人为腹不为目，故去彼取此。

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 the eye.

Hence, he rejects the one and accepts the other.

### 十三章

宠辱若惊，贵大患若身。何谓宠辱若惊？宠为下，得之若惊，失之若惊，是谓宠辱若惊。何谓贵大患若身？吾所以有大患者，为吾有身，及吾无身，吾有何患？故贵以身为天下，若可寄天下；爱以身为天下，若可托天下。

"Favor and disgrace cause one dismay;

What we value and what we fear are 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 this mean:

"What we value and what we fear are 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.

## 十四章

视之不见，名曰微；听之不闻，名曰希；搏之不得，名曰夷。此三者，不可致诘，故混而为一。其上不皎，其下不昧，绳绳兮不可名，复归于物。是谓无状之状，无物之象，是谓惚恍。迎之不见其首，随之不见其后。执古之道，以御今之有。能知古始，是谓道纪。

Looked at, but cannot be seen -  
That is called the Invisible (yi).  
Listened to, but cannot be heard -  
That is called the Inaudible (hsi).  
Grasped at, but cannot be touched -  
That is called the Intangible (wei).  
These three elude 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 again to the realm of nothingness.  
That is why it is called the Form of the Formless,  
The Image of 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.

## 十五章

古之善为道者，微妙玄通，深不可识。夫唯不可识，故强为之容：豫兮，若冬涉川；犹兮，若畏四邻；俨兮，其若客；涣兮，其若凌释；敦兮，其若朴；旷兮，其若谷；混兮，其若浊。孰能浊以止？静之徐清。孰能安以久？动之徐生。保此道者，不欲盈。夫唯不盈，故能蔽而新成。

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 guest,

Self-effacing, like ice beginning to melt,

Genuine, like a piece of undressed 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.

## 十六章

致虚极，守静笃。万物并作，吾以观复。夫物芸芸，各复归其根。归根曰静，静曰复命。复命曰常，知常曰明。不知常，妄作，凶。知常容，容乃公，公乃王，王乃天，天乃道，道乃久，殁身不殆。

Attain the utmost in Passivity,  
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.



## 十七章

太上，下知有之；其次，亲而誉之；其次，畏之；其次，侮之。信不足焉，有不信焉。悠兮其贵言。功成事遂，百姓皆谓“我自然”。

Of the best rulers

The people (only) know that they exist;

The next best the 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."

## 十八章

大道废，有仁义；智慧出，有大伪；六亲不和，有孝慈；国家昏乱，有忠臣。

On the decline of the great Tao,

The doctrine of "humanity" and "justice" arose.

When knowledge and cleverness appeared,

Great hypocrisy followed in its wake.

When the six relationships 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."

## 十九章

绝圣弃智，民利百倍；绝仁弃义，民复孝慈；绝巧弃利，盗贼无有。此三者以为文，不足。故令有所属：见素抱朴，少思寡欲，绝学无忧。

Banish wisdom, discard knowledge,  
And the people shall profit a hundredfold;  
Banish "humanity," discard "justice,"  
And the people shall recover love of their kin;  
Banish cunning, discard "utility,"  
And the 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.

## 二十章

唯之与阿，相去几何？美之与恶，相去若何？人之所畏，不可不畏。荒兮，其未央哉！众人熙熙，如享太牢，如春登台。我独泊兮，其未兆；沌沌兮，如婴儿之未孩；傴傴兮，若无所归。众人皆有馀，而我独若遗。我愚人之心也哉，沌沌兮！俗人昭昭，我独昏昏。俗人察察，我独闷闷。淡兮，其若海，望兮，若无止。众人皆有以，而我独顽似鄙。我独异于人，而贵食母。

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 partaking of the sacrificial feasts,  
As if mounting the terrace in spring;  
I alone am mild, like one unemployed,  
Like a new-born babe that cannot yet smile,  
Unattached, 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 a purpose;  
I alone appear stubborn and uncouth.  
I alone differ from the other people,  
And value drawing sustenance from the Mother.

## 二十一章

孔德之容，惟道是从。道之为物，惟恍惟惚。惚兮恍兮，其中有象；恍兮惚兮，其中有物；窈兮冥兮，其中有精；其精甚真，其中有信。自今及古，其名不去，以阅众甫。吾何以知众甫之状哉？以此。

The marks of great Character  
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 (manifested forms)!

## 二十二章

「曲则全，枉则直，洼则盈，敝则新，少则得，多则惑。」是以圣人抱一为天下式。不自见，故明；不自是，故彰；不自伐，故有功；不自矜，故长。夫唯不争，故天下莫能与之争。古之所谓「曲则全」者，岂虚言哉！诚全而归之。

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 chief among men.

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.

## 二十三章

希言自然。故飘风不终朝，骤雨不终日。孰为此者？天地。天地尚不能久，而况于人乎？故从事于道者，同于道；德者，同于德；失者，同于失。同于道者，道亦乐得之；同于德者，德亦乐得之；同于失者，失亦乐得之。信不足焉，有不信焉。

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 Character (Teh) is identified with  
Character.

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 character -

Character is also 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.

## 二十四章

企者不立；跨者不行；自见者不明；自是者不彰；自伐者无功；自矜者不长。其在道也，曰余食赘形。物或恶之，故有道者不处。

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 prides 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.



## 二十五章

有物混成，先天地生。寂兮寥兮，独立而不改，周行而不殆，可以为天地母。吾不知其名，字之曰道，强为之名曰大。大曰逝，逝曰远，远曰反。故道大，天大，地大，人亦大。域中有四大，而人居其一焉。人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。

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.  
There 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.

## 二十六章

重为轻根，静为躁君。是以君子终日行不离辎重，虽有荣观，燕处超然。奈何万乘之主，而以身轻天下？轻则失根，躁则失君。

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 the ruler of a great country  
Make light of his body in the empire (by rushing about)?  
In light frivolity, the Center is lost;  
In hasty action, self-mastery is lost.

## 二十七章

善行，无辙迹；善言，无瑕谪；善数，不用筹策；善闭，无关键而不可开；善结，无绳约而不可解。是以圣人常善救人，故无弃人；常善救物，故无弃物。是谓神明。故善人者，不善人之师；不善人者，善人之资。不贵其师，不爱其资，虽智大迷。是谓要妙。

A good runner leaves no track.

A good speech leaves no flaws for 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 man 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.

## 二十八章

知其雄，守其雌，为天下溪。为天下溪，常德不离。常德不离，复归于婴儿。知其荣，守其辱，为天下谷。为天下谷，常德乃足。常德乃足，复归于朴。知其白，守其黑，为天下式。为天下式，常德不忒。常德不忒，复归于无极。朴散则为器，圣人用之，则为官长。故大制无割。

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 original character (teh) which is not  
cut up.  
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 Primordial 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 the natural integrity of uncarved wood.  
Break up this uncarved wood  
And it is shaped into vessel  
In the hands of the Sage  
They become the officials and magistrates.  
Therefore the great ruler does not cut up.

## 二十九章

将欲取天下而为之，吾见其不得已。天下神器，不可为也。为者败之，执者失之。物，或行或随，或嘘或吹，或强或羸，或挫或隳。是以圣人去甚，去奢，去泰。

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.

### 三十章

以道佐人主者，不以兵强天下，其事好还：师之所居，荆棘生焉。大军之后，必有凶年。善有果而已，不以取强。果而勿矜，果而勿伐，果而勿骄，果而不得已，果而勿强。物壮则老，是谓不道，不道早已。

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 glory 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) things age after reaching their prime.  
That (violence) would be against the Tao.  
And he who is against the Tao perishes young.

### 三十一章

夫兵者，不祥之器。物或恶之，故有道者不居。君子居则贵左，用兵则贵右，故兵者非君子之器。不祥之器，不得已而用之，恬淡为上。胜而不美，而美之者，是乐杀人。夫乐杀人者，则不可得志于天下矣。吉事尚左，凶事尚右。偏将军居左，上将军居右，言以丧礼处之。杀人之众，以悲哀泣之，战胜以丧礼处之。

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.

### 三十二章

道常无名。朴虽小，天下莫能臣。侯王若能守之，万物将自宾。天地相合，以降甘露，民莫之令而自均。始制有名，名亦既有，夫亦将知止。知止可以不殆。譬道之在天下，犹川谷之于江海。

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.  
Then human civilization arose and there were names.  
Since there were names,  
It were well one knew where to stop.  
He who knows where to stop  
May be exempt from danger.  
Tao in the world  
May be compared to rivers that run into the sea.



### 三十三章

知人者智，自知者明。胜人者有力，自胜者强。知足者富，强行者有志。不失其所者久，死而不亡者寿。

He who knows others is learned;

He who knows himself is wide.

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.

### 三十四章

大道泛兮，其可左右。万物恃之而生而不辞，功成而不名有。衣养万物而不为主，可名于小；万物归焉而不为主，可名为大。以其终不自为大，故能成其大。

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 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.

### 三十五章

执大象，天下往。往而不害，安平太。乐与饵，过客止。道之出口，淡乎其无味，视之不足见，听之不足闻，用之不足既。      **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.

### 三十六章

将欲歛之，必故张之；将欲弱之，必故强之；将欲废之，必故兴之；将欲取之，必故与之。是谓微明。柔弱胜刚强。鱼不可脱于渊，国之利器不可以示人。

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.

### 三十七章

道恒无名，侯王若能守之，万物将自化。化而欲作，吾将镇之以无名之朴。无名之朴，夫亦将不欲。不欲以静，天地将自正。

The Tao never does,  
Yet through it everything is done.  
If princes and dukes 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.

### 三十八章

上德不德，是以有德；下德不失德，是以无德。上德无为而无以为；下德无为而有以为。上仁为之而无以为；上义为之而有以为。上礼为之而莫之应，则攘臂而扔之。故失道而后德，失德而后仁，失仁而后义，失义而后礼。夫礼者，忠信之薄，而乱之首。前识者，道之华，而愚之始。是以大丈夫居其厚，不居其薄；居其实，不居其华。故去彼取此。

The man of superior character is not (conscious of his) character.

Hence he has character.

The man of inferior character (is intent on) not losing character.

Hence he is devoid of character.

The man of superior character never acts,

Nor ever (does so) with an ulterior motive.

The man of inferior character 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) humanity.

After humanity 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 flowering 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.

### 三十九章

昔之得一者：天得一以清；地得一以宁；神得一以灵；谷得一以盈；侯得一以为天下正。其致之。天无以清，将恐裂；地无以宁，将恐废；神无以灵，将恐歇；谷无以盈，将恐竭；侯王无以贵高，将恐蹶。故贵以贱为本，高以下为基。是以侯王自谓「孤」、「寡」、「不谷」。此非以贱为本耶？非乎？故致数誉无誉。是故不欲禄禄如玉。珞珞如石。

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 would shake,  
Without stability, the Earth would quake,  
Without spiritual power, the gods would crumble,  
Without being filled, the valleys would crack,  
Without the life-giving power, all things would perish,  
Without the ennobling power, the princes and dukes would stumble.  
therefore the nobility depend upon the common man for support,  
And the exalted 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 the jade,  
Rumble like the rocks.

## 四十四章

反者道之动；弱者道之用。天下万物生于有，有生于无。

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.



## 四十一章

上士闻道，勤而行之；中士闻道，若存若亡；下士闻道，大笑之。不笑不足以为道。故建言有之：「明道若昧，进道若退，夷道若类，上德若谷，大白若辱，广德若不足，建德若偷；质真若渝，大方无隅，大器晚成，大音希声；大象无形。」道隐无名，夫唯道，善始且善成。

When the highest type of men hear the Tao (truth),  
they try hard to live in accordance with it.  
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 Tao.  
Therefore there is the established saying:  
"Who understands Tao seems dull of comprehension;  
Who is advance in Tao seems to slip backwards;  
Who moves on the even Tao (Path) seems to go up and down."  
Superior character appears like a hollow (valley);  
Sheer white appears like tarnished;  
Great character appears like infirm;  
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.

## 四十二章

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物。万物负阴而抱阳，冲气以为和。人之所恶，唯「孤」、「寡」、「不谷」。而王公以为称。故，物或损之而益，或益之而损。人之所教，我亦教之：「强梁者不得其死」，吾将以为教父。

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 princes and dukes call themselves by such names.

For sometimes things are benefited by being taken away from,  
And suffer by 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.

### 四十三章

天下之至柔，驰骋天下之至坚。无有入无间，吾是以知无为之有益。不言之教，无为之益，天下希及之。

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.

#### 四十四章

名与身孰亲？身与货孰多？得与亡孰病？是故，甚爱必大费，多藏必厚亡。知足不辱，知止不殆，可以长久。

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 meets no disgrace;

Who know when to stop runs into no danger -

He can long endure.

## 四十五章

大成若缺，其用不弊。大盈若冲，其用不穷。大直若屈，大巧若拙，大辩若讷。躁胜寒，静胜热，清静为天下正。

The highest perfection is like imperfection,  
And its use is never impaired.  
The greatest abundance seems meager,  
And its use will never fail.  
What s most straight appears devious,  
The greatest skill appears clumsiness;  
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.

## 四十六章

天下有道，却走马以粪。天下无道，戎马生于郊。祸莫大于不知足；咎莫大于欲得。故，知足之足，常足矣。

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 be always content.

## 四十七章

不出户，知天下；不窥牖，见天道。其出弥远，其知弥少。是以圣人不行而知，不见而明，不为而成。

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.

## 四十八章

为学日益，为道日损。损之又损，以致于无为。无为而无不为。取天下常以无事，及其有事，不足以取天下。

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).

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.



## 四十九章

圣人常无心，以百姓心为心。善者吾善之，不善者吾亦善之，得善。信者吾信之，不信者吾亦信之，得信。圣人在天下，歛歛焉，为天下浑其心，圣人皆孩之。

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.

## 五十五章

出生入死。生之徒，十有三；死之徒，十有三；人之生，动之死地，亦十有三。夫何故？以其生之厚。盖闻善摄生者，陵行不遇兕虎，入军不被甲兵。兕无所投其角，虎无所措其爪，兵无所容其刃。夫何故？以其无死地。

Out of life, death enters.

The companions (organs) of life are thirteen;

The companions (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 the who is a good preserver of hi 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.

How is it so?

Because he is beyond death.

## 五十一章

道生之，德畜之，物形之，器成之。是以万物莫不尊道而贵德。道之尊，德之贵，夫莫之命而常自然。故道生之，德畜之。长之育之，亭之毒之，养之覆之，生而不有，为而不恃，长而不宰，是谓玄德。

Tao gives them birth,

Teh (character) 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 is exalted

Without anyone's order but 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 shelter 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.

## 五十二章

天下有始，以为天下母。既得其母，以知其子。既知其子，复守其母，没身不殆。塞其兑，闭其门，终身不勤。启其兑，济其事，终身不救。见小曰明，守柔曰强。用其光，复归其明，无遗身殃，是为习常。

There was a beginning of the universe  
Which may be regarded as the Mother of the Universe.  
From 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 toil.  
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 rest in the Absolute.

### 五十三章

使我介然有知，行于大道，唯施是畏。大道甚夷，而民好径。朝甚除，田甚芜，仓甚虚，服文采，带利剑，厌饮食，财货有馀，是为盗竽。非道也哉！

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 (people's) granaries are very low.  
(Yet) clad in embroidered gowns,  
And carrying fine swords,  
Surfeited with good food and drinks,  
(They are) splitting with wealth and possessions.  
- This is to lead the world toward brigandage.  
Is this not corruption of Tao?

## 五十四章

善建者不拔，善抱者不脱，子孙以祭祀不辍。修之于身，其德乃真；修之于家，其德乃馀；修之于乡，其德乃长；修之于邦，其德乃丰；修之于天下，其德乃普。故以身观身，以家观家，以乡观乡，以邦观邦，以天下观天下。吾何以知天下然哉？以此。

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 fail.

Cultivated in the individual, character will become genuine;

Cultivated in the family, character will become abundant;

Cultivated in the village, character will multiply;

Cultivated in the state, character will prosper;

Cultivated in the world, character will become universal.

Therefore:

According to (the character of ) the individual,  
judge the individual;

According to (the character of ) the family,  
judge the family;

According to (the character of ) the village,  
judge the village;

According to (the character of ) the state,  
judge the state;

According to (the character of ) the world,  
judge the world.

How do I know this is so?

By this.

## 五十五章

含「德」之厚，比于赤子。毒虫不螫，猛兽不据，攫鸟不搏。骨弱筋柔而握固。未知牝牡之合而口作，精之至也。终日号而不嘎，和之至也。知和曰常，知常曰明，益生曰祥，心使气曰强。物壮则老，谓之不道，不道早已。

Who is rich in character

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 an 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.

## 五十六章

知者不言，言者不知。塞其兑，闭其门，挫其锐，解其纷，和其光，同其尘，是谓玄同。故不可得而亲，不可得而疏；不可得而利，不可得而害；不可得而贵，不可得而贱。故为天下贵。

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.



## 五十七章

以正治国，以奇用兵，以无事取天下。吾何以知其然哉？以此：天下多忌讳，而民弥贫；人多利器，国家滋昏；人多伎巧，奇物滋起；法令滋彰，盗贼多有。故圣人云：「我无为，而民自化；我好静，而民自正；我无事，而民自富；我无欲，而民自朴。」

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 greater the chaos 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.

## 五十八章

其政闷闷，其民淳淳；其政察察，其民缺缺。祸兮，福之所倚，福兮，祸之所伏。孰知其极？其无正。正复为奇，善复为妖。人之迷，其日固久！是以圣人方而不割，廉而不刿，直而不肆，光而不耀。

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.

## 五十九章

治人、事天，莫若嗇。夫为嗇，是谓早服，早服谓之重积德。重积德则无不克。无不克则莫知其极。莫知其极，可以有国。有国之母，可以长久。是谓深根固柢，长生久视之道。

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.

## 六十章

治大国，若烹小鲜。以道莅天下，其鬼不神；非其鬼不神，其神不伤人；非其神不伤人，圣人亦不伤人。夫两不相伤，故德交归焉。

Rule a big country as you would fry small fish.

Who rules the world in accord with Tao

Shall 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 not (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,

The original character is restored.

## 六十一章

大国者下流，天下之牝，天下之交。牝常以静胜牡，以静为下。故大国以下小国，则取小国；小国以下大国，则取大国。故或下以取，或下而取。大国不过欲兼畜人，小国不过欲入事人。夫两者各得所欲，大者宜为下。

A big country (should 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.

## 六十二章

道者，万物之奥。善人之宝，不善人之所保。美言可以市尊，美行可以加人。人之不善，何弃之有？故立天子，置三公，虽有拱璧以先驷马，不如坐进此道。古之所以贵此道者何？不曰：求以得，有罪以免邪？故为天下贵。

Tao is the mysterious secret of the universe,  
The good man's treasure,  
And the bad man's refuge.  
Beautiful saying 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 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.

## 六十三章

为无为，事无事，味无味。大小多少，报怨以德。图难于其易；为大于其细。天下难事，必作于易；天下大事，必作于细。是以圣人终不为大，故能成其大。夫轻诺必寡信，多易必多难。是以圣人犹难之，故终无难矣。

Accomplish do-nothing.

Attend to no-affairs.

Taste the flavorless.

Whether it is big or small, many or few,

Requite 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 with 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.

## 六十四章

其安易持；其未兆易谋；其脆易泮；其微易散。为之于未有，治之于未乱。合抱之木，生于毫末；九层之台，起于累土；千里之行，始于足下。为者败之；持者失之。是以，圣人无为，故无败；无持，故无失。民之从事，常于几成而败之。慎终如始，则无败事。是以圣人欲不欲，不贵难得之货，学不学，复众人之所过。以辅万物自然而不敢为。

That which lies still is easy to hold;  
That which is not yet manifest is easy to forestall;  
That which is brittle (like ice) easily melts;  
That which is minute easily scatters.  
Deal with a thing 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 beings 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.  
Learns 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.



## 六十五章

古之善为道者，非以明民，将以愚之。民之难治，以其智多。故以智治国，国之贼；不以智治国，国之福。知此两者亦稽式。常知稽式，是谓玄德。玄德深矣，远矣，与物反矣，然后乃至大顺。

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 leave 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 always the ancient standard  
Is called the Mystic Virtue.  
When the Mystic Virtue becomes clear, far-reaching,  
And things revert back (to their source)  
Then and then only emerges the Grand Harmony.

## 六十六章

江海所以能为百谷王者，以其善下之，故能为百谷王。是以圣人欲上民，必以言下之；欲先民，必以身后之。是以圣人居上而民不重，居前而民不害。是以天下乐推而不厌。以其不争，故天下莫能与之争。

How did the great rivers and seas become the Lords  
of the ravines?  
By being good at keeping low.  
That was how they became Lords of the Ravines.  
Therefore in order to be the 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.

## 六十七章

天下皆谓我道大，似不肖。夫唯大，故似不肖。若肖，久矣其细也夫！我有三宝，持而保之：一曰慈，二曰俭，三曰不敢为天下先。慈，故能勇；俭，故能广；不敢为天下先，故能成器长。今舍慈且勇，舍俭且广，舍后且先，死矣。夫慈，以战则胜，以守则固。天将救之，以慈卫之。

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 the 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 doomed!

For love is victorious in attack,

And invulnerable in defense.

Heaven arms with love

Those it would not see destroyed.

## 六十八章

善为士者，不武；善战者，不怒；善胜敌者，不与；善用人者，为之下。是谓不争之德，是谓用人，是谓配天，古之极也。 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.

## 六十九章

用兵有言：「吾不敢为主，而为客；不敢进寸，而退尺。」是谓行无行，攘无臂，执无兵，乃无敌矣。祸莫大于轻敌，轻敌几丧吾宝。故抗兵相若，哀者胜矣。

There is the maxim of military strategists;

I dare not be the first to invade, but rather be the invaded.

Dare not 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.

Therefore when two equally matched armies meet,

It is the man of sorrow who wins.

## 七十章

吾言甚易知，甚易行。天下莫能知，莫能行。言有宗，事有君。夫唯无知，是以不我知。知我者希，则我者贵。是以圣人被褐而怀玉。

My teachings are very easy to understand  
and very easy to practice,  
But no 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.

## 七十一章

知不知，上，不知不知，病。圣人不病，以其病病，是以不病。

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 as sick-mindedness,

Therefore he is not sick-minded.

## 七十二章

民不畏威，则大威至。无狎其所居，无厌其所生。夫唯不厌，是以不厌。是以圣人自知不自见，自爱不自贵。故去彼取此。

When people have no fear of force,  
Then (as is the common practice) great force descends  
upon 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).



### 七十三章

勇于敢，则杀，勇于不敢，则活。此两者，或利或害。天之所恶，孰知其故？天之道，不争而善胜，不言而善应，不召而自来，姍然而善谋。天网恢恢，疏而不失。

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 results without obvious design.

The heaven's net is broad and wide.

With big meshes, yet letting nothing slip through.

## 七十四章

民不畏死，奈何以死惧之？若使民常畏死，而为奇者，吾得执而杀之，孰敢？常有司杀者杀。夫代司杀者杀，是谓代大匠斫。夫代大匠斫者，希有不伤其手矣。

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 unruly,

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.

## 七十五章

民之饥，以其上食税之多，是以饥。民之难治，以其上之有为，是以难治。民之轻死，以其上求生之厚，是以轻死。夫唯无以生为者，是贤于贵生。      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.

## 七十六章

人之生也柔弱，其死也坚强。草木之生也柔脆，其死也枯槁。故坚强者死之徒，柔弱者生之徒。是以兵强则灭，木强则折，强大居下，柔弱居上。

When man is born, he is tender and weak;

At death, he is hard and stiff.

When the things and plants are alive, they are soft  
and supple;

When they are dead, they are brittle and dry.

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 a 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.

## 七十七章

天之道，其犹张弓欤？高者抑之，下者举之，有馀者损之，不足者补之。天之道，损有馀而补不足。人之道，则不然：损不足以奉有馀。孰能有馀以奉天下？唯有道者。是以圣人为而不恃，功成而不居，其不欲见贤。

The Tao (way) 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 that have not enough.

Not so with man's way:

He takes 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.

## 七十八章

天下莫柔弱于水，而攻坚强者莫之能胜，以其无以易之。弱之胜强，柔之胜刚，天下莫不知，莫能行。是以圣人云：「受国之垢，是谓社稷主；受国不祥，是为天下王。」正言若反。

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 king of the world."  
Straight words seem crooked.

## 七十九章

和大怨，必有余怨，安可以为善？是以圣人执左契，而不责于人。有德司契，无德司彻。  
天道无亲，常与善人     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 only with the good man."

## 八十章

小邦寡民。使有什伯之器而不用；使民重死而不远徙。虽有舟舆，无所乘之；虽有甲兵，无所陈之。使民复结绳而用之。甘其食，美其服，安其居，乐其俗。邻邦相望，鸡犬之声相闻，民至老死，不相往来。

(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 carriages,

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.



## 八十一章

信言不美，美言不信。善者不辩，辩者不善。知者不博，博者不知。圣人不积，既以为人已愈有，既以与人己愈多。天之道，利而不害；圣人之道，为而不争。

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.