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Chapter 1

Selections from The Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu



Lao Tzu, 18th Century French Print

About the author...

Lao Tzu (6th. cent. B.C.), according to Chinese legend, was an imperial court keeper of the archives. As an old man, discouraged with honesty of those around him, he left to go to the mountains of Tibet but was accosted at Kwan Yin (Hank Pass) by the guard Yin Hsi at the western border of China. The guard demanded that Lao Tzu present his teachings before he could pass. Puportedly, at that time, Lao Tzu composed the eighty-one verses of the *Tao Te Ching*.

About the work...

The name *Tao Te Ching*¹ can be translated as “classic of the way and power of excellence.” The *Tao Te Ching* expresses the harmony and simplicity of natural action; in point of fact, the scripture expresses the doctrine of *not* striving purposely—a kind of non-action or *wu-wei*. The goal of life is for each person to be one with *Tao*, the underlying source of the unity of nature.

Although some parts of the *Tao Te Ching* might have been written in the 6th century, probably most of the scriptural-text dates from around the 3rd century B.C.

From the reading...

“The *Tao* in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so there is nothing which it does not do.”

Ideas of Interest from *The Tao Te Ching*

1. What are the two aspects of the Mystery described in Chapter 1?
2. Explain the doctrine of *wu-wei* or non-action.
3. What is meant by the assertion that “The highest excellence is like (that of) water.” Provide examples with your explanation.
4. What is meant by leaving a vessel unfilled? Why should “a vessel” be left unfilled? How is it that emptiness is useful?
5. What are some of the moral qualities of the sage?
6. Describe of what the happiness of attaining to the *Tao* consists.
7. Explain what it means to “hide the light of [your] procedure” or to leave no traces. Is this notion a kind of ecological behavior?
8. If the *Tao* does nothing for the sake of doing it, then how is it that there is noting it does not do.?

1. Lao Tzu. *The Tao Te Ching*. Trans. James Legge. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1891.

9. Discuss whether the movement of *Tao* is by contraries or by contradictories. Try to ascertain why this would be so.
10. What are the relations between *Tao* and individual contentment or societal peace?
11. Discuss the possibility of “doing nothing” on purpose? How does this trick of language give insight into “the Way” for excellence? Moreover, how is it in such a life, “the tiger [finds no] place in which to fix its paws”?
12. How are gentleness, economy, and modesty in accord with *Tao*?

The Reading Selection from *The Tao Te Ching*

Part I. *The Tao Te Ching*.

Ch. 1

1. The *Tao* that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging *Tao*. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name.
2. (Conceived of as) having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; (conceived of as) having a name, it is the Mother of all things.
3. Always without desire we must be found,
If its deep mystery we would sound;
But if desire always within us be,
Its outer fringe is all that we shall see.
4. Under these two aspects, it is really the same; but as development takes place, it receives the different names. Together we call them the Mystery. Where the Mystery is the deepest is the gate of all that is subtle and wonderful.

Ch. 2

1. All in the world know the beauty of the beautiful, and in doing this they have (the idea of) what ugliness is; they all know the skill of the skilful, and in doing this they have (the idea of) what the want of skill is.
2. So it is that existence and non-existence give birth the one to (the idea of) the other; that difficulty and ease produce the one (the idea of) the other; that length

and shortness fashion out the one the figure of the other; that (the ideas of) height and lowness arise from the contrast of the one with the other; that the musical notes and tones become harmonious through the relation of one with another; and that being before and behind give the idea of one following another.

3. Therefore the sage manages affairs without doing anything, and conveys his instructions without the use of speech.

From the reading...

“The highest excellence is like (that of) water.”

4. All things spring up, and there is not one which declines to show itself; they grow, and there is no claim made for their ownership; they go through their processes, and there is no expectation (of a reward for the results). The work is accomplished, and there is no resting in it (as an achievement).

The work is done, but how no one can see;
'Tis this that makes the power not cease to be.

Ch. 7

1. Heaven is long-enduring and earth continues long. The reason why heaven and earth are able to endure and continue thus long is because they do not live of, or for, themselves. This is how they are able to continue and endure.

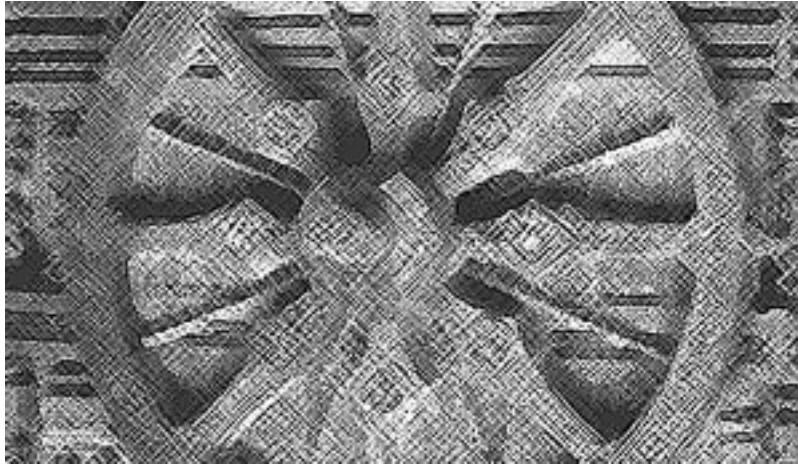
2. Therefore the sage puts his own person last, and yet it is found in the foremost place; he treats his person as if it were foreign to him, and yet that person is preserved. Is it not because he has no personal and private ends, that therefore such ends are realised?

Ch. 8

1. The highest excellence is like (that of) water. The excellence of water appears in its benefiting all things, and in its occupying, without striving (to the contrary), the low place which all men dislike. Hence (its way) is near to (that of) the *Tao*.

2. The excellence of a residence is in (the suitability of) the place; that of the mind is in abysmal stillness; that of associations is in their being with the virtuous; that of government is in its securing good order; that of (the conduct of) affairs is in its ability; and that of (the initiation of) any movement is in its timeliness.

3. And when (one with the highest excellence) does not wrangle (about his low position), no one finds fault with him.



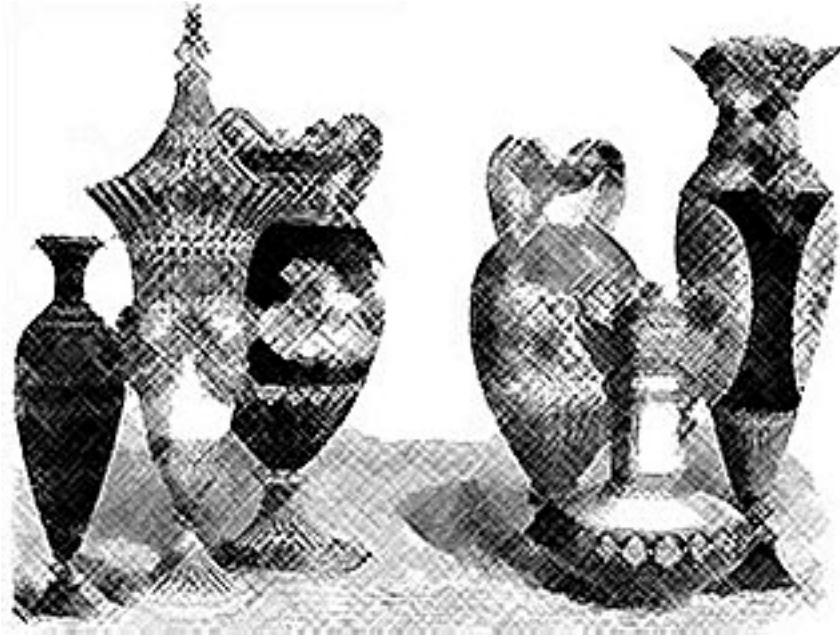
The thirty spokes unite in the one nave; but it is on the empty space (for the axle), that the use of the wheel depends.

Ch. 9

1. It is better to leave a vessel unfilled, than to attempt to carry it when it is full. If you keep feeling a point that has been sharpened, the point cannot long preserve its sharpness.
2. When gold and jade fill the hall, their possessor cannot keep them safe. When wealth and honours lead to arrogancy, this brings its evil on itself. When the work is done, and one's name is becoming distinguished, to withdraw into obscurity is the way of Heaven.

Ch. 11

1. The thirty spokes unite in the one nave; but it is on the empty space (for the axle), that the use of the wheel depends. Clay is fashioned into vessels; but it is on their empty hollowness, that their use depends. The door and windows are cut out (from the walls) to form an apartment; but it is on the empty space (within), that its use depends. Therefore, what has a (positive) existence serves for profitable adaptation, and what has not that for (actual) usefulness.



Vases, James D. McCabe

Ch. 14

1. We look at it, and we do not see it, and we name it “the Equable.” We listen to it, and we do not hear it, and we name it “the Inaudible.” We try to grasp it, and do not get hold of it, and we name it “the Subtle.” With these three qualities, it cannot be made the subject of description; and hence we blend them together and obtain The One.

2. Its upper part is not bright, and its lower part is not obscure. Ceaseless in its action, it yet cannot be named, and then it again returns and becomes nothing. This is called the Form of the Formless, and the Semblance of the Invisible; this is called the Fleeting and Indeterminable.

From the reading...

“The thirty spokes unite in the one nave; but it is on the empty space (for the axle), that the use of the wheel depends.”

3. We meet it and do not see its Front; we follow it, and do not see its Back. When we can lay hold of the *Tao* of old to direct the things of the present day, and are able to know it as it was of old in the beginning, this is called (unwinding) the clue of *Tao*.

Ch. 20

1. When we renounce learning we have no troubles.

The (ready) “yes,” and (flattering) “yea;”—
Small is the difference they display.
But mark their issues, good and ill;—
What space the gulf between shall fill?

What all men fear is indeed to be feared; but how wide and without end is the range of questions (asking to be discussed)!

2. The multitude of men look satisfied and pleased; as if enjoying a full banquet, as if mounted on a tower in spring. I alone seem listless and still, my desires having as yet given no indication of their presence. I am like an infant which has not yet smiled. I look dejected and forlorn, as if I had no home to go to. The multitude of men all have enough and to spare. I alone seem to have lost everything. My mind is that of a stupid man; I am in a state of chaos.

Ordinary men look bright and intelligent, while I alone seem to be benighted. They look full of discrimination, while I alone am dull and confused. I seem to be carried about as on the sea, drifting as if I had nowhere to rest. All men have their spheres of action, while I alone seem dull and incapable, like a rude borderer. (Thus) I alone am different from other men, but I value the nursing-mother (the *Tao*).

Ch. 22

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

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

3. That saying of the ancients that “the partial becomes complete” was not vainly spoken:—all real completion is comprehended under it.

Ch. 23

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

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

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

Ch. 24

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

From the reading...

“It is because he is thus free from striving that therefore no one in the world is able to strive with him.”

Ch. 25

1. There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone, and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger (of being exhausted)! It may be regarded as the Mother of all things.

2. I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of the *Tao* (the Way or Course). Making an effort (further) to give it a name I call it The Great.

Chapter 1. Selections from *The Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu

3. Great, it passes on (in constant flow). Passing on, it becomes remote. Having become remote, it returns. Therefore the *Tao* is great; Heaven is great; Earth is great; and the (sage) king is also great. In the universe there are four that are great, and the (sage) king is one of them.

4. Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the *Tao*. The law of the *Tao* is its being what it is.

Ch. 27

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

2. Therefore the man of skill is a master (to be looked up to) by him who has not the skill; and he who has not the skill is the helper of (the reputation of) him who has the skill. If the one did not honour his master, and the other did not rejoice in his helper, an (observer), though intelligent, might greatly err about them. This is called "The utmost degree of mystery."

Ch. 29

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

2. The course and nature of things is such that
What was in front is now behind;
What warmed anon we freezing find.
Strength is of weakness oft the spoil;
The store in ruins mocks our toil.

Hence the sage puts away excessive effort, extravagance, and easy indulgence.

Ch. 32

1. The *Tao*, considered as unchanging, has no name.

2. Though in its primordial simplicity it may be small, the whole world dares not deal with (one embodying) it as a minister. If a feudal prince or the king could guard and hold it, all would spontaneously submit themselves to him.

From the reading...

“The skilful traveller leaves no traces of his wheels or footsteps.”

3. Heaven and Earth (under its guidance) unite together and send down the sweet dew, which, without the directions of men, reaches equally everywhere as of its own accord.

4. As soon as it proceeds to action, it has a name. When it once has that name, (men) can know to rest in it. When they know to rest in it, they can be free from all risk of failure and error.

5. The relation of the *Tao* to all the world is like that of the great rivers and seas to the streams from the valleys.

Ch. 37

1. The *Tao* in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so there is nothing which it does not do.

2. If princes and kings were able to maintain it, all things would of themselves be transformed by them.

3. If this transformation became to me an object of desire, I would express the desire by the nameless simplicity.

Simplicity without a name
Is free from all external aim.
With no desire, at rest and still,
All things go right as of their will.

Part II. *The Tao Ching.*

Ch. 38

1. (Those who) possessed in highest degree the attributes (of the *Tao*) did not (seek) to show them, and therefore they possessed them (in fullest measure). (Those who)

Chapter 1. Selections from *The Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu

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

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

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

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

5. Thus it was that when the *Tao* was lost, its attributes appeared; when its attributes were lost, benevolence appeared; when benevolence was lost, righteousness appeared; and when righteousness was lost, the proprieties appeared.

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

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

Ch. 40

1. The movement of the *Tao*
By contraries proceeds;
And weakness marks the course
Of *Tao*'s mighty deeds.

2. All things under heaven sprang from It as existing (and named); that existence sprang from It as non-existent (and not named).

Ch. 43

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

From the reading...

“There is no guilt greater than to sanction ambition; no calamity greater than to be discontented with one’s lot; no fault greater than the wish to be getting.”

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

Ch. 46

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

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

Ch. 47

1. Without going outside his door, one understands (all that takes place) under the sky; without looking out from his window, one sees the *Tao* of Heaven. The farther that one goes out (from himself), the less he knows.

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

Ch. 48

1. He who devotes himself to learning (seeks) from day to day to increase (his knowledge); he who devotes himself to the *Tao* (seeks) from day to day to diminish (his doing).



Street Scene, Chefang China, Library of Congress

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

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

Ch. 49

1. The sage has no invariable mind of his own; he makes the mind of the people his mind.

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

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

Ch. 50

1. Men come forth and live; they enter (again) and die.

2. Of every ten three are ministers of life (to themselves); and three are ministers of death.

3. There are also three in every ten whose aim is to live, but whose movements tend to the land (or place) of death. And for what reason? Because of their excessive endeavours to perpetuate life.

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

Ch. 51

1. All things are produced by the *Tao*, and nourished by its outflowing operation. They receive their forms according to the nature of each, and are completed according to the circumstances of their condition. Therefore all things without exception honour the *Tao*, and exalt its outflowing operation.

2. This honouring of the *Tao* and exalting of its operation is not the result of any ordination, but always a spontaneous tribute.

3. Thus it is that the *Tao* produces (all things), nourishes them, brings them to their full growth, nurses them, completes them, matures them, maintains them, and overspreads them.

4. It produces them and makes no claim to the possession of them; it carries them through their processes and does not vaunt its ability in doing so; it brings them to maturity and exercises no control over them;—this is called its mysterious operation.

Ch. 56

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

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

From the reading...

“(The master of it) anticipates things that are difficult while they are easy, and does things that would become great while they are small.”

3. (Such an one) cannot be treated familiarly or distantly; he is beyond all consideration of profit or injury; of nobility or meanness:—he is the noblest man under heaven.

Ch. 63

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

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

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

Ch. 64

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

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

3. He who acts (with an ulterior purpose) does harm; he who takes hold of a thing (in the same way) loses his hold. The sage does not act (so), and therefore does no harm; he does not lay hold (so), and therefore does not lose his hold. (But) people in their conduct of affairs are constantly ruining them when they are on the eve of success. If they were careful at the end, as (they should be) at the beginning, they would not so ruin them.

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

Ch. 66

Chapter 1. Selections from The Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu

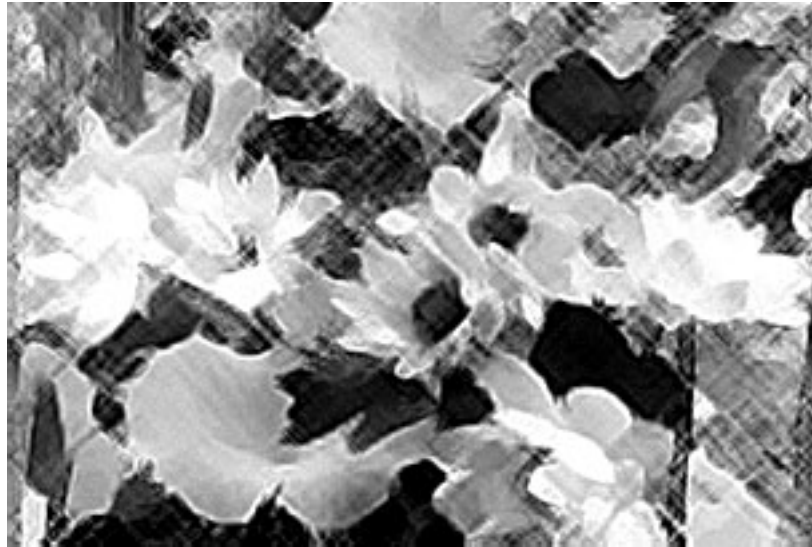
1. That whereby the rivers and seas are able to receive the homage and tribute of all the valley streams, is their skill in being lower than they;—it is thus that they are the kings of them all. So it is that the sage (ruler), wishing to be above men, puts himself by his words below them, and, wishing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

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

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

Ch. 38

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



Lotus, Library of Congress

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

3. With that gentleness I can be bold; with that economy I can be liberal; shrinking from taking precedence of others, I can become a vessel of the highest honour.

Now-a-days they give up gentleness and are all for being bold; economy, and are all for being liberal; the hindmost place, and seek only to be foremost;—(of all which the end is) death.

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

Ch. 68

He who in (*Tao's*) wars has skill
Assumes no martial port;
He who fights with most good will
To rage makes no resort.
He who vanquishes yet still
Keeps from his foes apart;
He whose hests men most fulfil
Yet humbly plies his art...
Thus we say, "He ne'er contends,
And therein is his might."
Thus we say, "Men's wills he bends,
That they with him unite."
Thus we say, "Like Heaven's his ends,
No sage of old more bright."

Ch. 71

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

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

Ch. 72

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

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

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

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

Ch. 77

1. May not the Way (or *Tao*) of Heaven be compared to the (method of) bending a bow? The (part of the bow) which was high is brought low, and what was low is raised up. (So Heaven) diminishes where there is superabundance, and supplements where there is deficiency.
2. It is the Way of Heaven to diminish superabundance, and to supplement deficiency. It is not so with the way of man. He takes away from those who have not enough to add to his own superabundance.
3. Who can take his own superabundance and therewith serve all under heaven? Only he who is in possession of the *Tao*!

From the reading...

“(The master of it) anticipates things that are difficult while they are easy, and does things that would become great while they are small.”

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

Ch. 38

There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, and yet for attacking things that are firm and strong there is nothing that can take precedence of it;—for there is nothing (so effectual) for which it can be changed.

2. Every one in the world knows that the soft overcomes the hard, and the weak the strong, but no one is able to carry it out in practice.
3. Therefore a sage has said,
“He who accepts his state’s reproach,
Is hailed therefore its altars’ lord;
To him who bears men’s direful woes
They all the name of King accord.”

4. Words that are strictly true seem to be paradoxical.

Ch. 79

1. When a reconciliation is effected (between two parties) after a great animosity, there is sure to be a grudge remaining (in the mind of the one who was wrong). And how can this be beneficial (to the other)?
2. Therefore (to guard against this), the sage keeps the left-hand portion of the record of the engagement, and does not insist on the (speedy) fulfilment of it by the other party. (So), he who has the attributes (of the *Tao*) regards (only) the conditions of the engagement, while he who has not those attributes regards only the conditions favourable to himself.
3. In the Way of Heaven, there is no partiality of love; it is always on the side of the good man.

Ch. 81

1. Sincere words are not fine; fine words are not sincere. Those who are skilled (in the *Tao*) do not dispute (about it); the disputatious are not skilled in it. Those who know (the *Tao*) are not extensively learned; the extensively learned do not know it.
2. The sage does not accumulate (for himself). The more that he expends for others, the more does he possess of his own; the more that he gives to others, the more does he have himself.
3. With all the sharpness of the Way of Heaven, it injures not; with all the doing in the way of the sage he does not strive.

From the reading . . .

“(The master of it) anticipates things that are difficult while they are easy, and does things that would become great while they are small.”



There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, and yet for attacking things that are firm and strong there is nothing that can take precedence of it. . . ,
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Topics Worth Investigating

1. Compare and contrast the Western doctrine of polar opposites with the Eastern doctrine of *yin—yang*. Are these doctrines metaphysical or logical or both?
2. Clarify the doctrine of *wu-wei* or non-action. The *The Tao Te Ching* emphasizes “there is no expectation (of a reward for the results). The work is accomplished and there is no resting in it (as an achievement).” Contrast this idea with that of the *Bhagavad Gita*, to do “all work as an offering to God abandoning attachment to the results.”
3. The *The Tao Te Ching* states “The law of the *Tao* is its being what it is.” In what ways is this remark profound and not an empty tautology? Is the *Tao* considered in this manner analogous to the Western notion of the laws of nature?
4. Contrast the political advice for the strategy of winning in the *The Tao Te Ching* with Miyamoto Musashi’s *The Book of Five Rings* and Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*.

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