

## A traditional Chinese ink wash painting of a bearded man, likely a scholar or official, seated at a desk. He is wearing a yellow robe with black trim and has a long white beard. He is holding a brush in his right hand, writing on a scroll. A small black inkstone is visible on the desk. In the background, there is a pine branch. The painting is framed by a green border.

<sup>2</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky in “The Secret Doctrine”, vol. I, p. XXV. Click to see “The Secret Doctrine” in one of our [associated websites](#). (CCA)



## **Chapter Two:** **THE RISE OF RELATIVE OPPOSITES**

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 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.

## **Chapter Three:** **ACTION WITHOUT DEEDS**

Exalt not the wise <sup>6</sup>,  
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 <sup>7</sup>  
Makes full their bellies,  
Discourages their ambitions,  
Strengthens their frames;  
So that the people may be purified of their thoughts and desires.

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<sup>6</sup> Exalting the wise in government is a typically Confucianist idea. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>7</sup> "Empty-heart" in the Chinese language means "open-mindedness", or "humility", a sign of the cultured gentleman. Throughout this book, "empty" and "full" are used as meaning "humility" and "pride" respectively. (Lin Yutang)

And the cunning ones shall not presume to interfere.<sup>8</sup>  
 By action without deeds<sup>9</sup>  
 May all live in peace.

## **Chapter Four**

### **THE CHARACTER OF TAO**

Tao is all-pervading<sup>10</sup>,  
 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 crystal clear like still water it seems to remain.  
 I do not know whose Son it is,  
 An image of what existed before any divinity.<sup>11</sup>

## **Chapter Five:**

### **NATURE**

Nature is unkind:  
 It treats the creation like sacrificial straw-dogs.  
 The Sage is unkind:

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<sup>8</sup> *Wei*, “to act”, frequently used in this book to denote “interfere”. *Wu-wei*, or “inaction” practically means non-interference, for it is the exact equivalent of “*laissez-faire*”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>9</sup> In her well-known article “Practical Occultism”, Helena Blavatsky writes about the path to wisdom as “the path which leads to the knowledge of what is good to do, as to the right discrimination of good from evil; a path which also leads a man to that power through which he can do the good he desires, often without even apparently lifting a finger.” This principle of esoteric wisdom is the same as *wu-wei*. (CCA)

<sup>10</sup> *Ch’ung*, “empty”, “mild”, “formless”, “filling all space”. Another reading, *chung*, “Tao is an empty vessel”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>11</sup> We here follow Hua-Ching Ni, “any divinity”, instead of Lin Yutang’s wrong choice, “God”. (See “The Complete Works of Lao Tzu”, Hua-Ching Ni, SevenStar Communications Group, Santa Monica, CA, 1993, 214 pp., page 05.) In another well-documented version of the Tao Teh Ching, Wing-Tsit Chan has it “the Lord”, which is more acceptable since it clearly indicates a poetical and mystical symbolism. Wing-Tsit Chan says in a footnote: “All commentators agree that ‘The Lord’ means the Lord of Heaven”. (“The Way of Lao Tzu”, translated with notes by Wing-Tsit Chan, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, copyright 1963, 285 pp., pages 105-106.) French thinker Stanislas Julien (“Le Tao Te King”, 1842, Kessinger Books), has it “le maître du ciel”, the lord of Heaven. There is no God in Taoism, but the poetical personification of cosmic intelligences is part of the wisdom tradition in every nation. (CCA)

He treats the people like sacrificial straw-dogs.<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup>

## **Chapter Six:** **THE SPIRIT OF THE VALLEY**

The Spirit of the Valley<sup>14</sup> never dies.  
It is called Mystic Female.<sup>15</sup>  
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.<sup>16</sup>

## **Chapter Seven:** **LIVING FOR OTHERS**

The universe is everlasting.  
The reason the universe is everlasting  
Is that it does not live for Self.<sup>17</sup>  
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?

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<sup>12</sup> The doctrine of naturalism, the Sage reaching the impartiality and often the stolid indifference of Nature. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>13</sup> Center, the original nature of man. “Hold to the core” is an important Taoist tenet. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>14</sup> The Valley, like the bellows, is a symbol of Taoistic “emptiness”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>15</sup> The principle of *yin*, the negative, the receptive, the quiescent. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>16</sup> He who makes use of Nature’s laws accomplishes results “without labor”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>17</sup> Gives life to others through its transformations. (Lin Yutang)

## **Chapter Eight:** **WATER**

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.

## **Chapter Nine:** **THE DANGER OF OVERWEENING SUCCESS**

Stretch (a bow) <sup>18</sup> 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 the Heaven's way.<sup>19</sup>

## **Chapter Ten:** **EMBRACING THE ONE**

In embracing the One <sup>20</sup> with your soul,

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<sup>18</sup> Throughout Laotse, the idea of *ying*, “fullness” or “filled to the brim”, associated with pride, is condemned as the opposite of “emptiness” or “humility”, because success contains the seeds of downfall. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>19</sup> The whole chapter is rhymed. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>20</sup> Important phrase in Taoism. (Lin Yutang)

Can you never forsake the Tao?  
 In controlling your vital force to achieve gentleness,  
 Can you become like the new-born child?<sup>21</sup>  
 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?<sup>22</sup>  
 In comprehending all knowledge,  
 Can you renounce the mind?<sup>23</sup>

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.

## **Chapter Eleven:** **THE UTILITY OF NOT-BEING**

**T**hirty 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.

## **Chapter Twelve:** **THE SENSES**

**T**he five colors blind the eyes of man;  
 The five musical notes deafen the ears of man;  
 The five flavors dull the taste of man;

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<sup>21</sup> The babe as symbol of innocence, a common imagery found also in Chuangtse; sometimes the imagery of the "new-born calf" is used. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>22</sup> The *Yin*, the receptive, the passive, the quiet. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>23</sup> This section is rhymed throughout. (Lin Yutang)

Horse-racing, hunting and chasing madden the minds of man;  
Rare, valuable goods keep their owners awake at night.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore the Sage:  
Provides for the belly and not for the eye.<sup>25</sup>  
Hence, he rejects the one and accepts the other.

## **Chapter Thirteen:** **PRAISE AND BLAME**

“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 this mean:  
“What we value and what we fear<sup>26</sup> are as if within our Self?”  
We have fears because we have a self.<sup>27</sup>  
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.

## **Chapter Fourteen:** **PREHISTORIC ORIGINS**

Looked at, but cannot be seen -  
That is called the Invisible (*yi*).  
Listened to, but cannot be heard -  
That is called the Inaudible (*hsi*).

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<sup>24</sup> Lit. “Keep one on one’s guard”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>25</sup> “Belly” here refers to the inner self, the unconscious, the instinctive; the “eye” refers to the external self or the sensuous world. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>26</sup> Interpreted as life and death. The text of Chuangtse confirms this interpretation. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>27</sup> Lit. “body”. (Lin Yutang)



Grasped at, but cannot be touched -  
That is called the Intangible (*wei*).<sup>28</sup>  
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 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.

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 <sup>29</sup> of Tao.

## **Chapter Fifteen:** **THE WISE ONES OF OLD**

The wise ones of old <sup>30</sup> 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,<sup>31</sup> like a piece of undressed wood,<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Jesuit scholars consider these three words (in ancient Chinese pronounced nearly like *i-hi-wei*) an interesting coincidence with the Hebrew word, “*Jahve*”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>29</sup> *Chi*, a word meaning “main body of tradition”, “system” and also “discipline”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>30</sup> Another ancient text, the “rulers”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>31</sup> *Tun*, “thickness”, like solid furniture, associated with the original simplicity of man, in opposition to “thinness”, associated with cunning, over-refinement and sophistication. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>32</sup> *P’u*, important Taoist idea, the uncarved, the unembellished, the natural goodness and honesty of man. Generally used to mean simplicity, plainness of heart and living. (Lin Yutang)

Open-minded, like a valley,  
And mixing freely,<sup>33</sup> 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,<sup>34</sup>  
He is beyond wearing out and renewal.

## **Chapter Sixteen:** **KNOWING THE ETERNAL LAW**

Attain the utmost in Humility;<sup>35</sup>  
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.<sup>36</sup>  
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;<sup>37</sup>  
Being kingly, he is in accord with Nature;<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Hun*, “muddled”, “mixing freely”, therefore “easygoing”, “not particular”. Taoist wisdom: a wise man should appear like a fool. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>34</sup> Self-satisfaction, conceit. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>35</sup> *Hsü*: emptiness, void. But in actual usage, this “emptiness” has no other meaning than “humility”. Both “humility” and “quietude” are central Taoist ideas. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>36</sup> *Ch'ang*, the “constant”, the law of growth and decay, of necessary alternation of opposites, can be interpreted as the “universal law of nature”, or the “inner law of man”, the true self (*hsingming chih ch'ang*), the two being identical in their nature. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>37</sup> *Wang*; a possible translation is “cosmopolitan”, i.e., regarding the world as one. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>38</sup> *T'ien*, heaven or nature. Both “t'ien” here and Tao in the next line are clearly used as adjectives; hence the translation “in accord with”. *T'ien* very commonly means “nature”, or “natural”. (Lin Yutang)

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.

## **Chapter Seventeen:** **RULERS**

Of the best rulers  
 The people (only) know<sup>39</sup> that they exist;  
 The next best they love and praise;  
 The next they fear;  
 And the next they revile.<sup>40</sup>  
 When they do not command the people's faith,  
 Some will lose faith in them,  
 And then they will resort to oaths!  
 But (of the best) when their task is accomplished, their work done,  
 The people all remark, "We have done it ourselves".<sup>41</sup>

## **Chapter Eighteen:** **THE DECLINE OF TAO**

On the decline of the great Tao,  
 The doctrines of "love" and "justice"<sup>42</sup> arose.  
 When knowledge and cleverness appeared,  
 Great hypocrisy followed in its wake.  
 When the six relationships<sup>43</sup> 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".

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<sup>39</sup> Some texts read: "The people do *not* know". (Lin Yutang)

<sup>40</sup> These "rulers" correspond to various levels of consciousness, or they typically operate from them. In theosophy, such Layers of Action have a correspondence to Atma, Buddhi, Buddhi-Manas and Kama-Manas, respectively. (CCA)

<sup>41</sup> The voice of the conscience is the Voice of the Silence. The highest commands do not sound on the physical plane. The affinity between one's mortal soul and one's immortal spirit rarely needs words to flow, and the same applies to all those who live in harmony. (CCA)

<sup>42</sup> Essential Confucian doctrines, usually translated (badly) as "benevolence" and "righteousness". (Lin Yutang)

<sup>43</sup> Father, Son, elder brother, younger brother, husband, and wife. See Stanislas Julien (Kessinger Legacy) and Wing-Tsit Chan (Prentice Hall). (CCA)

## **Chapter Nineteen:** **REALIZE THE SIMPLE SELF**

Banish wisdom, discard knowledge,<sup>44</sup>  
 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 the thieves and brigands will disappear.<sup>45</sup>  
 As these three touch the externals and are inadequate;  
 The people have need of what they can depend upon:  
 Reveal thy Simple Self,<sup>46</sup>  
 Embrace thy Original Nature,  
 Check thy selfishness,  
 Curtail thy desires.<sup>47</sup>

## **Chapter Twenty:** **THE WORLD AND I**

Banish learning, and vexations end.<sup>48</sup>  
 Between “Ah!” and “Ough!”<sup>49</sup>  
 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;

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<sup>44</sup> Banish excessive talk about wisdom and knowledge. (CCA)

<sup>45</sup> The ideas of Chapters 18 and 19 are fully developed by Chuangtse (Ch. X, “Opening Trunks”). (Lin Yutang)

<sup>46</sup> *Su*, the unadorned, uncultured, the innate quality, simple self; originally “plain silk background” as opposed to superimposed colored drawings; hence the expression to “reveal”, “realize”, *su*. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>47</sup> The eight characters in these four lines sum up practical Taoist teachings. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>48</sup> Banish artificial learning, developed with selfish aims, and vexations end. The present chapter unmasks the fact that spiritually ignorant people have great pleasure in pretending they are sages, while true sages - because they do not pay too much attention to appearance - are often seen as fools. (CCA)

<sup>49</sup> *Wei* and *o*. “*O*” an utterance of disapproval. (Lin Yutang)

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.<sup>50</sup>

## **Chapter Twenty-One:** **MANIFESTATIONS OF TAO**

**T**he marks of great Virtue <sup>51</sup>  
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 Father of All Things?

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<sup>50</sup> Imagery of the sucking child, symbolizing drawing power from Mother Nature. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>51</sup> *Teh* as manifestation of Tao, the active aspect of Tao, the moral principle, tr. by Waley as “power”. (Lin Yutang)

Through These!<sup>52</sup>

## **Chapter Twenty-Two:** **FUTILITY OF CONTENTION**

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,<sup>53</sup>  
And becomes the model of the world.  
He does not reveal himself,  
And is therefore luminous.<sup>54</sup>  
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?”<sup>55</sup>  
Thus he is preserved and the world does him homage.

## **Chapter Twenty-Three:** **IDENTIFICATION WITH TAO**

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.

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<sup>52</sup> Manifested forms. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>53</sup> The Absolute, to which transient attributes revert. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>54</sup> *Ming* with two meanings, “clear” (bright, sterling) and “clear-sighted” (wise, discerning). (Lin Yutang)

<sup>55</sup> Another Chinese proverb: “Yield your land boundaries all your life and you never lose half; yield your way to fellow passengers all your life and you never lose a step.” (Lin Yutang)

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 (*Teh*) 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 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.

## **Chapter Twenty-Four:** **THE DREGS AND TUMORS OF VIRTUE**

He who stands on tiptoe does not stand (firm);  
He who strains his strides<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup>  
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.

## **Chapter Twenty-Five:** **THE FOUR ETERNAL MODELS**

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.

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<sup>56</sup> Hurrying, striving, ambitious. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>57</sup> An excess of “Yang” or expansive energy. Anxiety. (CCA)

Therefore: Tao is Great,  
 The Heaven is great,  
 The Earth is great,  
 The King is also great.<sup>58</sup>  
 These are the Great Four in the universe,  
 And the King is one of them.

Man models himself after the Earth;  
 The Earth model itself after Heaven;  
 The Heaven models itself after Tao;  
 Tao models itself after Nature.<sup>59</sup>

## **Chapter Twenty-Six:** **HEAVINESS AND LIGHTNESS**

The Solid<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup>  
 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? <sup>62</sup>  
 In light frivolity, the Center is lost;  
 In hasty action, self-mastery is lost.

## **Chapter Twenty-Seven:** **ON STEALING THE LIGHT**

A good runner leaves no track.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The idea of King or Head of State stands for social order, and social ethics. (CCA)

<sup>59</sup> *Tse-jan*, lit. “self-so”, “self-formed”, “that which is so by itself”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>60</sup> Literally “heavy”, with the Earth as model. In Chinese, “heaviness” or “thickness” of character, meaning “honesty”, “generosity”, is associated with the idea of stable luck and endurance, whereas “thinness” or “lightness” of character, meaning “frivolity” or “sharpness”, is associated with lack of stable luck. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>61</sup> A pun on the phrase, containing the word “heavy”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>62</sup> By rushing about. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>63</sup> Wise men “walk on water”. The mystics of different traditions develop ways to erase their “personal stories”. Helena Blavatsky wrote in a letter to her biographer Alfred Sinnett: “...Then from 17 to 40 I took care during my travels to sweep away all traces of myself wherever I went. (...) I never allowed people to know *where* I was and *what* I was doing.” (“The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett”, Theosophical University Press, California, 404 pp., see p. 154.) Carlos Castaneda taught the same principle and practiced it. The writer J. D. Salinger, who did not present himself as a mystic, also applied the rule in his life. (CCA)



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.<sup>64</sup>  
 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.<sup>65</sup>  
 - This is called stealing<sup>66</sup> the Light.

Therefore the good man is the Teacher of the bad.  
 And the bad man is the lesson<sup>67</sup> of the good.

He who neither values his teacher  
 Nor loves the lesson<sup>68</sup>  
 Is one gone far astray,  
 Though he be learned.  
 - Such is the subtle secret.

## **Chapter Twenty-Eight:** **KEEPING TO THE FEMALE**

He who is aware of the Male  
 But keeps to the Female<sup>69</sup>  
 Becomes the ravine<sup>70</sup> of the world.

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<sup>64</sup> When the necessary karmic conditions exist, a door can be “closed” by psychic means and through the use of magnetic energy, mental and emotional. (CCA)

<sup>65</sup> The Sage uses each according to his talent. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>66</sup> *Hsi*, to enter or secure by devious means such as invasion, attack at night, penetration, etc. The idea is cunningly to make use of knowledge of nature’s law to obtain the best results. See full development by Chuangtse, especially in his parable of Prince Hui’s cook. Ch. III. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>67</sup> *Tse*, raw-material, resources, help, something to draw upon for profit, such as a lesson. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>68</sup> The ignorant or selfish individual is a “lesson” to the good man. Citizens of good will must try to help spiritually ignorant people and thus “learn the lesson”. (CCA)

<sup>69</sup> “He who is aware of the Male but keeps to the Female”, in this version by Lin Yutang; or “He who knows the male and keeps to the female” (Wing-tsit Chan); “Know that you possess the strong masculine principle, yet abide the meek, feminine principle” (Hua-Chung Ni); and Stanislas Julien has “He who knows his strength and preserves [*the consciousness of*] fragility”. (CCA)

<sup>70</sup> See Chapter Six. The valley, or ravine is symbol of the Female Principle, the receptive, the passive. (Lin Yutang)

Being the ravine of the world,  
He has the eternal power <sup>71</sup> 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 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 pristine simplicity.

Break up this pristine simplicity<sup>72</sup>  
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.

## **Chapter Twenty-Nine:** **WARNING AGAINST INTERFERENCE**

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 a spiritual thing<sup>73</sup>  
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;<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Teh*. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>72</sup> *P'u*, a piece of unhewn wood, symbol of unspoiled Nature. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>73</sup> “The world is a spiritual thing”. Lin Yutang has “the world is God’s own Vessel”. Since the idea of a “God” is an artificial fabrication and has no place in Taoism, we follow Wing-Tsit Chan at this point. Stanislas Julien has it in these words: “The empire is (like) a divine vessel”, or literally in his French edition “L’empire est (comme) un vase divin”. Hua-Ching Ni: “The sovereignty of the world is a subtle thing”. (CCA)

<sup>74</sup> Lit. “blow out”, “blow in”. I follow Waley’s rendering, which conveys the meaning perfectly. (Lin Yutang)

Some are strong,  
 And some are weak;  
 Some may break,  
 And some may fall.  
 Hence the Sage eschews excess,  
 eschews extravagance,  
 eschews pride.

### **Chapter Thirty:** **WARNING AGAINST THE USE OF FORCE**

**H**e who by Tao purposes to help the ruler of men  
 Will oppose all conquest by force of arms.<sup>75</sup>  
 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.<sup>76</sup>

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.

### **Chapter Thirty-One:** **WEAPONS OF EVIL**

**O**f all things, soldiers<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> The Chinese character for “military” is composed of two parts: “stop” and “arms”. Chinese pacifists interpret this as meaning disapproval of arms (“stop armament”), whereas it may just as well mean to stop the enemy by force. Etymologically, however, the word for “stop” is a picture of a footprint, so the whole is a picture of a “spear” over “footprints”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>76</sup> These six lines are by Waley, for they cannot be improved upon. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>77</sup> Another reading, “fine weapons”. *Ping* can mean both “soldiers” and “weapons”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>78</sup> These are ceremonial arrangements. The left is symbol of good omen, the creative; the right is symbol of bad omen, the destructive. (Lin Yutang)

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,<sup>79</sup>  
 And he 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.<sup>80</sup>

## **Chapter Thirty-Two:** **TAO IS LIKE THE SEA**

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.<sup>81</sup>  
 Since names there were,  
 It were well one knew where to stop for repose.  
 He who knows where to stop for repose  
 May from danger be exempt.  
 Tao in the world

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<sup>79</sup> Another equally good reading, “no boasting”, “and who boasts of victory”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>80</sup> One of the five Cardinal Rites of *Chou-li*. The last five lines but two read like a commentary, interpolated in the text by mistake. The evidence is conclusive: (1) The terms “lieutenant-general” and “general” are the only ones in the whole text that are anachronisms, for these terms did not exist till Han times. (2) The commentary by Wang Pi is missing in this chapter, so it must have slipped into the text by a copyist’s mistake. See also Ch. 69. Cf. Mencius, “The best fighter should receive the supreme punishment”; again “Only he who does not love slaughter can unify the empire.” (Lin Yutang)

<sup>81</sup> Names imply differentiation of things and loss of original state of Tao. (Lin Yutang)

May be compared  
To rivers that run into the sea.<sup>82</sup>

### **Chapter Thirty-Three:** **KNOWING ONESELF**

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.<sup>83</sup>  
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.

### **Chapter Thirty-Four:** **THE GREAT TAO FLOWS EVERYWHERE**

The Great Tao flows everywhere,  
(Like a flood) it may go left or right.<sup>84</sup>  
The myriad things derive their life from it,  
And it does not deny them.  
When its work is accomplished,  
It does not take possession.<sup>85</sup>  
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<sup>86</sup> of all things, yet claiming not,  
It may be considered great.  
Because to the end it does not claim greatness,  
Its greatness is achieved.

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<sup>82</sup> Really to be compared to the sea, or to the rivers seeking repose in the sea. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>83</sup> The Dhammapada says: “Better than a man who conquers in battles a thousand times a thousand men is he who conquers himself. He indeed is the mightiest of warriors.” (“The Dhammapada”, Chapter Eight, paragraph four, Theosophy Company edition.) (CCA)

<sup>84</sup> Humanistic and theosophical causes cannot therefore be advanced through bureaucratic actions developed from a corporate, or sectarian, point of view. (CCA)

<sup>85</sup> So do the true altruistic projects and the theosophical movement. *Wu-wei*. (CCA)

<sup>86</sup> Lit. “rendezvous”. (Lin Yutang)

## **Chapter Thirty-Five:** **THE PEACE OF TAO**

**H**old the Great Symbol <sup>87</sup>  
 And all the world follows,  
 Follows without meeting harm,  
 (And lives in) health, peace, commonwealth. <sup>88</sup>  
 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; <sup>89</sup>  
 Applied, its supply never fails.

## **Chapter Thirty-Six:** **THE RHYTHM OF LIFE**

**H**e 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. <sup>90</sup>

## **Chapter Thirty-Seven:** **WORLD PEACE**

**T**he Tao never does,  
 Yet through it everything is done. <sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The symbol of Nature, Heaven or Earth. This chapter consists of rhymed three-word lines. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>88</sup> Once the right key-note is sounded in the right moment, every smaller pattern of vibration adapts to the correct context of the Karmic cycle. (CCA)

<sup>89</sup> The voice of the silence, in theosophy. (CCA)

<sup>90</sup> When the lives of animals are respected, it is easier to avoid cruelty and war among humans. (CCA)

<sup>91</sup> The *Wu-wei* principle of “invisible” action, or action on, and from, higher levels of consciousness. (CCA)

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.<sup>92</sup>

### **Chapter Thirty-Eight:** **DEGENERATION**

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.<sup>93</sup>  
 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* <sup>94</sup> 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.  
 False knowledge is the flowering of Tao  
 And the beginning of ignorance.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> The present chapter teaches a silent yet deep revolution in the way a materialistic society looks at the road to peace and to social reform. True progress does not take place by the satisfaction of material desires. It results instead from abandoning, or restraining, material desires through the principle of voluntary simplicity. (CCA)

<sup>93</sup> These lines apply to different individuals of the same age in human history, and they are also valid regarding the various phases of human evolution in long-term history, as described in the book “The Secret Doctrine” by Helena P. Blavatsky. (CCA)

<sup>94</sup> *Li*, Confucian doctrine of social order and control, characterized by rituals; also courtesy, good manners. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>95</sup> We follow Stanislas Julien in these two lines. Lin Yutang has this: “The prophets are the flowering of Tao / And the origin of folly”. The word “prophets” makes no sense in the “Tao Teh Ching”. Footnote 12 by Stanislas Julien (in “Le Tao Te King”, Lao Tseu, Kessinger Legacy Reprints) shows that the process of “flowering” is limited and rootless in itself. (CCA)

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.

## **Chapter Thirty-Nine:** **UNITY THROUGH COMPLEMENTS**

**T**here 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,<sup>96</sup>  
 Without spiritual power, the gods might crumble,  
 Without being filling, the valleys 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 depends 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).<sup>97</sup>

Rather than jingle like the jade,<sup>98</sup>

Rumble like the rocks.

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<sup>96</sup> In this second part of chapter 39 the “Tao Teh Ching” establishes a direct correspondence between the moral growth or decay of humanity and the geological-climatological evolution of our planet. The same correlation is stated in the Taoist “Wen-tzu”; in “The Secret Doctrine”, by H. P. Blavatsky; in Plato’s Dialogues and in the Jewish-Christian Bible, among other classic works of different nations. (CCA)

<sup>97</sup> Another commonly accepted reading through word-substitution in the text: “Truly, the highest prestige requires no praise.” Apart from the forced substitution of words, this reading makes no sense in the context. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>98</sup> Being an ornamental gem, the jade here symbolizes luxury and artificiality. (CCA)



## **Chapter Forty:** **THE PRINCIPLE OF REVERSION**

Reversion is the action of Tao.  
Gentleness is the function of Tao.<sup>99</sup>  
The things of this world come from Being,  
And Being (comes) from Non-being.<sup>100</sup>

## **Chapter Forty-One:** **QUALITIES OF THE TAOIST**

When the highest type of men hear the Tao (truth),  
They practice it diligently.  
When the mediocre type (of men) hear the Tao,  
They seem to be aware and yet unaware of it.  
When the lowest type (of men) hear the Tao,  
They break into loud laughter, -  
If it were not laughed at, it would not be Tao.<sup>101</sup>

Therefore there is the established saying:  
“Who understands Tao seems dull of comprehension;  
Who is advanced in Tao seems to slip backwards;<sup>102</sup>  
Who moves on the even Tao (Path) 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 infirm;

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<sup>99</sup> Stanislas Julien has the two lines thus: “The return to non-Being is the movement of Tao. / Fragility is the function of the Tao.” Hua-Ching Ni’s version of the *Tao Teh Ching* presents the two sentences in four lines: “Returning to itself / is how the eternal Tao exercises itself. / Being gentle and yielding / is how the eternal Tao employs itself.” (CCA)

<sup>100</sup> Hua-Ching Ni more visibly aligns himself with the theosophical philosophy by using the words “Manifest” and “Unmanifest” instead of “Being”, and “Non-Being”. It must be taken into consideration that Stanislas Julien and Lin Yutang use “Being” as meaning the external mayavic existence, and “non-Being” as the essential, true, inner, universal existence. The alternation between Being and Non-being, or Manifest and Unmanifest, obeys to the law of cycles. (CCA)

<sup>101</sup> Actively ignorant individuals must necessarily reject truth and wisdom: if they didn’t reject them, they would not be spiritually ignorant, or what they reject would not be true wisdom. (CCA)

<sup>102</sup> In the New Testament, Matthew 20: 16 says: “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.” (CCA)

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 fulfilment.

## **Chapter Forty-Two:** **THE VIOLENT MAN**

Out of Tao, One is born;  
 Out of One, Two;  
 Out of Two, Three;  
 Out of Three, the created universe.<sup>103</sup>  
 The created universe carries the *yin* at his 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.<sup>104</sup>  
 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 you also:  
 “The violent man shall die a violent death.”<sup>105</sup>  
 This I shall regard as my spiritual teacher.

## **Chapter Forty-Three:** **THE SOFTEST SUBSTANCE**

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.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The creation of the universe through numbers is a central topic in Pythagoras, in Plato, in Blavatsky and the Jewish Kabbalah. See part I of Volume I in “The Secret Doctrine”, by Helena Blavatsky. (CCA)

<sup>104</sup> See chapter 39. (CCA)

<sup>105</sup> The law of Karma. In the Christian New Testament, which is much more recent than the Tao Teh Ching, Jesus says according to Matthew 26.52: “... All they who take the sword will perish with the sword”. (CCA)

<sup>106</sup> Pervading influence of the spirit reaches everywhere, in contrast with superficial activities which create obstacles of their own. “That-which-is-without-form”, etc. is further developed by Chuangtse (Ch. III). (Lin Yutang)

The teaching without words  
And the benefit of taking no action  
Are without compare in the universe.<sup>107</sup>

### **Chapter Forty-Four:** **BE CONTENT**

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 knows when to stop runs into no danger -  
He can long endure.

### **Chapter Forty-Five:** **CALM QUIETUDE**

The highest perfection is like imperfection,<sup>108</sup>  
And its use is never impaired.  
The greatest abundance seems meagre,  
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.

### **Chapter Forty-Six:** **RACING HORSES**

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.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> On the principle of *wu-wei*, or invisible action, see chapter 37, among others. (CCA)

<sup>108</sup> Because it assumes fluid form according to circumstances. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>109</sup> Stanislas Julien has it thus: "When the Tao ruled the world, the horses were used to cultivate the soil. Since the Tao stopped ruling the world, combat horses appear on the borders." (CCA)

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.

## **Chapter Forty-Seven:** **PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE**

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.<sup>110</sup>

## **Chapter Forty-Eight:** **CONQUERING THE WORLD BY INACTION**

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.<sup>111</sup>  
 When one is compelled to do something,<sup>112</sup>  
 The world is already beyond his conquering.

## **Chapter Forty-Nine:** **THE PEOPLE'S HEARTS**

The Sage has no decided opinions and feelings,<sup>113</sup>  
 But regards the people's opinions and feelings as his own.

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<sup>110</sup> "Understands without seeing, / accomplishes without doing": *Wu-wei*, occult action, invisible research. The study and work done from higher levels of consciousness looks like doing nothing. (CCA)

<sup>111</sup> By moral influence. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>112</sup> By ordering people about. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>113</sup> *Hsin*, literally "heart". Both thinking and feeling are denoted by this word. It is impossible to say a "decided heart". (Lin Yutang)

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.<sup>114</sup>

The Sage dwells in the world peacefully, harmoniously.<sup>115</sup>  
 The people of the world are brought into a community of heart<sup>116</sup>,  
 And the Sage regards them all as his own children.

## **Chapter Fifty:** **THE PRESERVING OF LIFE**

Out of life, death enters.  
 The organs of life are thirteen;<sup>117</sup>  
 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.<sup>118</sup>  
 How is it so?

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<sup>114</sup> A large portion of the *Tao Teh Ching* is dedicated to the description and study of the long-term work of the Adepts, Mahatmas, and high Initiates for mankind. The Sage who is an Immortal does not create Karma on a personal level. His Karma or Action is impersonal and takes place on the level of the higher self. Such a Sage stimulates the spiritual awakening of all, but does not get involved in personal issues or individual short-term choices. He works for mankind as a whole. (CCA)

<sup>115</sup> The Buddhist “Dhammapada” says: “Let us, then, free from hate, live happily among those who hate; among men who hate let us dwell free from hate.” (Chapter Fifteen, “The Dhammapada”, Theosophy Co., Los Angeles, 1955, p. 47.) The Sage is severe with himself, rather being harsh with the others. He improves the world mainly by irradiating wisdom, secondarily by showing mistakes to be corrected. (CCA)

<sup>116</sup> “Community of heart” - universal brotherhood. See also, in our associated websites, the article “[All Life Is Good](#)”. (CCA)

<sup>117</sup> According to Han Fei, the four limbs and nine external cavities. Another orthodox reading is “three-tenths”, but this makes less sense. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>118</sup> This passage enumerates some of the powers of an Adept-Initiate. (CCA)

Because he is beyond death.<sup>119</sup>

## **Chapter Fifty-One:** **THE MYSTIC VIRTUE**

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 is 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.<sup>120</sup>

## **Chapter Fifty-Two:** **STEALING THE ABSOLUTE**

There was a beginning of the universe  
Which may be regarded as the Mother of 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,

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<sup>119</sup> Lit., "deathless". (Lin Yutang)

<sup>120</sup> On the Mystic Virtue, see also chapter ten. (CCA)

And return to clear-sightedness -  
 Thus cause not yourself later distress.  
 - This is to steal the Absolute.

### **Chapter Fifty-Three:** **BRIGANDAGE**

If I were possessed of the 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 spick 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 towards brigandage.  
 Is it not the corruption of Tao?

### **Chapter Fifty-Four:** **THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE STATE**

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, 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.<sup>121</sup>

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.

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<sup>121</sup> The good Karma flows in a series of concentric circles. See in our websites the article  
 “[The Center of Pascal’s Sphere](#)”. (CCA)

How do I know the world is so.  
By this.<sup>122</sup>

## **Chapter Fifty-Five:** **THE VIRTUES OF THE CHILD**

Who is rich<sup>123</sup> 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 an ill-omen;  
To let go the emotions through impulse<sup>124</sup> is called assertiveness.  
(For) things age after reaching their prime;  
That (assertiveness) would be against Tao.  
And he who is against Tao perishes young.

## **Chapter Fifty-Six:** **BEYOND HONOR AND DISGRACE**

He who knows does not speak;  
He who speaks does not know.<sup>125</sup>  
Fill up its apertures,  
Close its doors,  
Dull its edges,  
Untie its tangles,  
Soften its light,

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<sup>122</sup> From within myself; or the meaning could be very well developed in the following chapter, since the chapter division is not original. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>123</sup> Lit. “thick”, “heavy”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>124</sup> *Hsin*, lit. “mind”, or “heart”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>125</sup> The axiom does not apply to different individuals only. In the same person, that level of consciousness where real knowledge exists does not express itself by speech; and that level of consciousness which expresses itself through words is not the consciousness where real knowledge exists. Therefore one can also say that “That which knows does not speak; That which speaks does not know.” (CCA)



Submerge its turmoil,  
- This is the Mystic Unity.<sup>126</sup>

Then love and hatred cannot touch him.  
Profit and loss cannot reach him.  
Honor and disgrace cannot affect him.<sup>127</sup>  
Therefore is he always the honored one of the world.

## **Chapter Fifty-Seven:** **THE ART OF GOVERNMENT**

**R**ule a kingdom by the Normal.  
Fight a battle by (abnormal) tactics of surprise.<sup>128</sup>  
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<sup>129</sup> 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 <sup>130</sup> 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.

## **Chapter Fifty-Eight:** **LAZY GOVERNMENT**

**W**hen the government is lazy and dull,  
Its people are unspoiled;

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<sup>126</sup> All submerged in the One. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>127</sup> Short term love and hatred, short term or external profit and loss, superficial honor and disgrace. Wise men are subject to Law, but not to illusion or superficiality. However, the perception and the words must be united by deep sincerity. (CCA)

<sup>128</sup> *Cheng*, the normal, the straight, the righteous; *ch'i*, the abnormal, the deceitful, the surprising. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>129</sup> *Ch'i*, same word as that used for “surprise tactics”, which implied disapproval as being not proper for ruling a kingdom. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>130</sup> *Hua*, touched, transformed, “civilized” by moral influence. The best explanation of “doing nothing”. (Lin Yutang)

When the government is efficient and smart,<sup>131</sup>  
Its people are discontented.

Disaster is the avenue of fortune,  
(And) fortune is the concealment for disaster.<sup>132</sup>  
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,<sup>133</sup>  
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),<sup>134</sup>  
Is straight, but not high-handed,  
Bright, but not dazzling.

## **Chapter Fifty-Nine:** **BE SPARING**

In managing human affairs, there is no better rule than to be sparing,<sup>135</sup>  
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.

## **Chapter Sixty:** **RULING A BIG COUNTRY**

Rule a big country as you would fry small fish.<sup>136</sup>

Who rules a country in accord with Tao

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<sup>131</sup> “Efficient and smart” - and manipulative. (CCA)

<sup>132</sup> Defeat and victory are relative terms, and seldom separate from one another. (CCA)

<sup>133</sup> At this point Lin Yutang adds a footnote inviting the reader to see one of the notes to the previous chapter, which says: “*Cheng*, the normal, the straight, the righteous; *ch’i*, the abnormal, the deceitful, the surprising.” (CCA)

<sup>134</sup> In removing corruption by artificial laws and statutes and punishments. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>135</sup> Never do too much. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>136</sup> Let alone, or the fish will become paste by constant turning about. (Lin Yutang)

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 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,  
 Virtue (power) flows towards them.<sup>137</sup>

## **Chapter Sixty-One:** **BIG AND SMALL COUNTRIES**

A big country (must be like) the delta low-regions,  
 Being the concourse of the world,  
 It is the Mother of the world.<sup>138</sup>  
 The peaceful and the feminine always overcome the masculine.  
 Being peaceable, one takes the lower position.

Therefore if a big country places itself below a small country,  
 It absorbs<sup>139</sup> 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),<sup>140</sup>  
 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.

## **Chapter Sixty-Two:** **THE GOOD MAN'S TREASURE**

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,

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<sup>137</sup> When the Tao permeates all things, there is no conflict between sky and Earth any longer. (CCA)

<sup>138</sup> In this chapter, and especially in its first lines, we follow in part the version made by Hua-Ching Ni. (CCA)

<sup>139</sup> *Ch'ü*, takes, conquers, overcomes, wins over. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>140</sup> Leadership occurs by altruistic actions. This chapter examines the process of victory through humbleness. (CCA)

Noble conduct can be presented as a gift.  
 Though there be bad people,  
 Why reject them? <sup>141</sup>

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”?<sup>142</sup>  
 Therefore is (Tao) the treasure of the world.

### **Chapter Sixty-Three:** **DIFFICULT AND EASY**

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.

### **Chapter Sixty-Four:** **BEGINNING AND END**

That which lies still is easy to hold;  
 That which is not yet manifest is easy to forestall;<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Using people as scapegoats is worse than useless. Contrast and difference must be accepted as much as possible. (CCA)

<sup>142</sup> Fighting the causes of unethical behaviour is better than fighting its effects. Reeducating is better than merely punishing. (CCA)

<sup>143</sup> The Yoga aphorisms of Patanjali say that the pain and mistakes which have not occurred yet can be avoided. See Book II, 16. (CCA)

That which is brittle (like ice) is easy to melt;  
 That which is minute is easy to scatter.  
 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* begins at one's feet.<sup>144</sup>

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.

## **Chapter Sixty-Five:** **THE GRAND HARMONY**

The Ancients who knew how to follow the Tao  
 Aimed not to enlighten the people,  
 But to keep them ignorant.<sup>145</sup>  
 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 always the Ancient Standard  
 Is called the Mystic Virtue.  
 When the Mystic Virtue becomes clear, far-reaching,<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> The ancient Chinese unit of distance called "li" is generally the equivalent to some 574 meters, approximately one third of a mile, sometimes more than that. (CCA)

<sup>145</sup> The Ancients who knew how to follow the Tao / Aimed not to [*artificially*] enlighten the people, / But to keep them ignorant [*of selfish, fragmentary and manipulative forms of knowledge*]. When lower forms of knowledge become dominant and are used for selfish ends, civilizations decay and may destroy themselves. (CCA)

<sup>146</sup> On the Mystic Virtue, see also chapters ten and fifty-one. (CCA)

And things revert back (to their source),  
Then and then only emerges the Grand Harmony.

## **Chapter Sixty-Six:** **THE LORDS OF THE RAVINES**

**H**ow 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.<sup>147</sup>  
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.

## **Chapter Sixty-Seven:** **THE THREE TREASURES**

**A**ll 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.<sup>148</sup>  
The second is, Never too much.<sup>149</sup>  
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.

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<sup>147</sup> See Chapter 6. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>148</sup> *Ts'e*, tender love (associated with the mother). (Lin Yutang)

<sup>149</sup> *Chien*, lit. "frugality", "be sparing"; see Chapter 59. (Lin Yutang)

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.<sup>150</sup>  
 Heaven arms with love  
 Those it would not see destroyed.

## **Chapter Sixty-Eight:** **THE VIRTUE OF NOT-CONTENDING**

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.  
 [It] is called the capacity to use men.  
 [It] is reaching to the height of being  
 Mated to Heaven, to what was of old.

## **Chapter Sixty-Nine:** **CAMOUFLAGE**

There is the maxim of military strategists;  
 I dare not be the first to invade, but rather be the invaded.<sup>151</sup>  
 Dare not press forward an inch, but rather retreat a foot.  
 That is, to march without formations,  
 To roll not up the sleeves,  
 To charge not in frontal attacks,  
 To arm without weapons.<sup>152</sup>  
 There is no greater catastrophe than to underestimate the enemy.  
 To underestimate the enemy might entail the loss of my treasures.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> See Chapters 31, 69. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>151</sup> *Invader* and *invaded*, lit. “host” and “guest”. It is possible to read it differently by supplying the often dropped “when”: “When I dare not be the invader, then I will be the defender”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>152</sup> Or to feel like being in this condition, i.e., the subjective condition of humility. This is entirely consistent with Laotse’s philosophy of camouflage, the earliest in the world. Cf. “great eloquence is like stuttering”, etc., Ch. 45. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>153</sup> Possibly the “three Treasures” in Ch. 67. (Lin Yutang)

Therefore when two equally matched armies meet,  
It is the man of sorrow <sup>154</sup> who wins.

## **Chapter Seventy:** **THEY KNOW ME NOT**

**M**y teachings are very easy to understand and very easy to practise,  
But no one can understand them and no one can practise 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. <sup>155</sup>

## **Chapter Seventy-One:** **SICK-MINDEDNESS**

**W**ho knows that he does not know is the highest; <sup>156</sup>  
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.

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<sup>154</sup> Who hates killing. See Ch. 31. The corrected text of Yü Yüeh would make this read, “The man who yields wins.” (Lin Yutang)

<sup>155</sup> The principle of “hiding one’s good actions and virtues and showing one’s failures” is taught in esoteric philosophy. See “Isis Unveiled”, by Helena Blavatsky, volume I, pp. 599-600. [Click here to examine the book.](#) In the New Testament, Jesus denounces the “whited sepulchres” who do the opposite. (CCA)

<sup>156</sup> Eastern and Western traditions have much in common. The tenet expounded in the present chapter is also Platonic and Socratic. Rousseau adopted it. In Plato’s “Apology” [21, 22, 23], Socrates defends the same point of view while commenting why he was declared the wisest man in Greece. For centuries Socrates’ words have been summed up in the famous sentence whose various forms are ascribed to him: “I know that I know nothing”, “The only thing I know is that I know nothing” and “I know one thing; that I know nothing”. (CCA)



## **Chapter Seventy-Two:** **ON PUNISHMENT - 01** <sup>157</sup>

When people have no fear of force,<sup>158</sup>  
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.<sup>159</sup>  
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).

## **Chapter Seventy-Three:** **ON PUNISHMENT - 02**

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,<sup>160</sup>  
With big meshes, yet letting nothing slip through.

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<sup>157</sup> Chapters 72, 73, 74 and 75 are closely related in thought and similar in construction. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>158</sup> *Wei*, military force or authority; sometimes also used in connection with "celestial anger". Another interpretation, "when the people have no fear of Heaven, then Heaven's anger descends upon them". But this fits in not so well with the context. See next two chapters on the futility of punishment, especially the first two lines, Ch. 74. (Lin Yutang) Regarding the above note, Mr. Lin Yutang - who was partly Christian - uses the words "God", "God's anger", and so on. Since there is no monotheistic god in Taoism, we avoid his good-willing mistake by adopting "celestial anger" and "Heaven's anger". Heaven, in Taoism, stands for the divine world and the divine aspect of the universe. (CCA)

<sup>159</sup> In the New Testament, Jesus says: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". This is the Golden Rule, also present in Confucianism and Judaism. (CCA)

<sup>160</sup> This has now become a Chinese proverb for "virtue always rewarded, vice always punished". (Lin Yutang)

## **Chapter Seventy-Four:** **ON PUNISHMENT - 03**

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? <sup>161</sup>  
 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. <sup>162</sup>

## **Chapter Seventy-Five:** **ON PUNISHMENT - 04**

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. <sup>163</sup>  
 It is those who interfere not with their living.  
 That are wise in exalting life.

## **Chapter Seventy-Six:** **HARD AND SOFT**

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;

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<sup>161</sup> Notice the similarity of construction with the first five lines of Chapter 73. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>162</sup> He who helps others in the exercise of violence brings upon himself the corresponding Karma. (CCA)

<sup>163</sup> Yet the present chapter is not an invitation for the people to revolt against the rulers. It is an invitation instead for the rulers to lead their nations with due wisdom and compassion and teaching voluntary simplicity by example. (CCA)

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 <sup>164</sup>, 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. <sup>165</sup>

## **Chapter Seventy-Seven:** **BENDING THE BOW**

The Tao (Way) of Heaven,  
Is it not like the bending of a bow?  
The top comes down and the bottom-end goes up, <sup>166</sup>  
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 away from those who 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.

## **Chapter Seventy-Eight:** **NOTHING WEAKER THAN WATER**

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,

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<sup>164</sup> *Ch'iang* means “stiff”, “strong”, and “headstrong”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>165</sup> As with twigs and trunks. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>166</sup> In accordance with this principle, two interlaced triangles form the Jewish seal of Solomon, the Hindu Sri-Yantra, and the symbol of the modern theosophical movement. One of the triangles points from the celestial world downwards to terrestrial life. The other one points from material life upwards to celestial consciousness. Click and see in our associated websites “[The Mahatma Letters](#)”, Letter LIX, pp. 345-346. (CCA)

No one does not know;  
No one can put into practice.<sup>167</sup>

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.”<sup>168</sup>  
Straight words seem crooked.

## **Chapter Seventy-Nine:** **PEACE SETTLEMENTS**

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,<sup>169</sup>  
And does not put the guilty on the other party.  
The virtuous man is for patching up;  
The vicious is for fixing guilt.<sup>170</sup>  
But “the way of Heaven is impartial  
It sides only with the good man.”<sup>171</sup>

## **Chapter Eighty:** **THE SMALL UTOPIA**

(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<sup>172</sup> 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.

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<sup>167</sup> Everyone knows that altruism is the path to true happiness, few act accordingly. (CCA)

<sup>168</sup> The wisest and the most honest are often chosen as scapegoat by the mechanisms of organized ignorance. Helena Blavatsky wrote that every aspirant to wisdom must challenge the collective ignorance of the communities to which he belongs, from his biological family to humanity as a whole. (CCA)

<sup>169</sup> Sign of inferiority in an agreement. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>170</sup> Wang Pi’s commentary: “for pointing out faults”. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>171</sup> An ancient quotation appearing in many ancient texts. (Lin Yutang)

<sup>172</sup> Lit. “death”. (Lin Yutang)

Let the people again tie ropes for reckoning,<sup>173</sup>  
 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.<sup>174</sup>

## **Chapter Eighty-One:** **THE WAY OF HEAVEN**

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.<sup>175</sup>  
 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.

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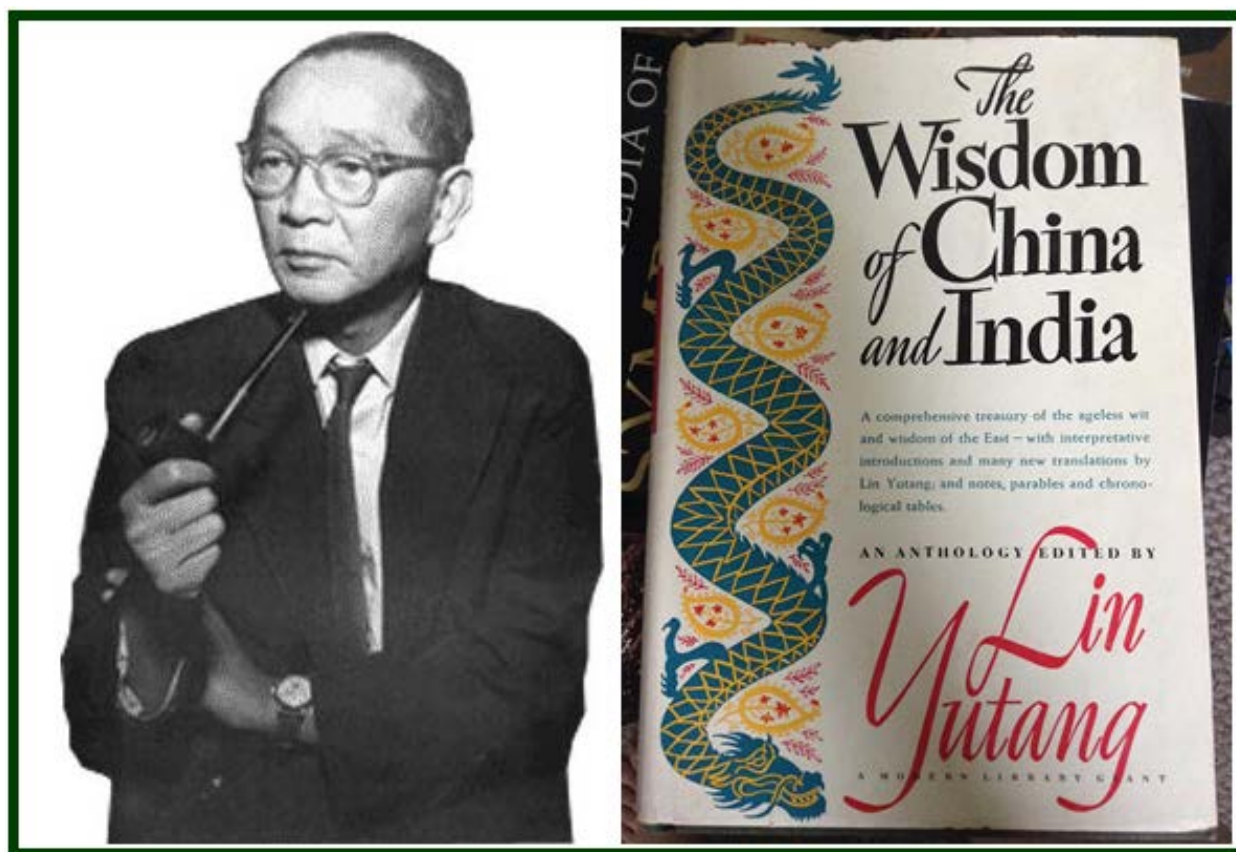
“**The Tao Teh Ching**”, in the above version made by Lin Yutang, was published in PDF by the associated websites on 18 June 2019. It had been previously published as a series of articles in “**The Aquarian Theosophist**” between April and December 2018.

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<sup>173</sup> Reference to an ancient form of Chinese writing, similar to one of the ancient writings of Andean nations; the quipus, or Khipu. The *khipu* (a quechua language term) was a form of recording and making messages also by produced tying ropes or cords, and its code included the use of colours. Classic theosophy says that there are many valuable elements in common between the ancient Andean nations and the countries of the Far East, which belong to ancient cycles of human history. (CCA)

<sup>174</sup> Migration is associated to wars, social catastrophes and environmental crises. (CCA)

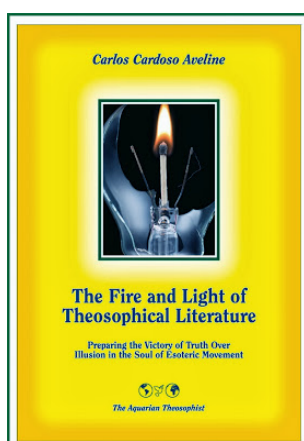
<sup>175</sup> In its last chapter, the “Tao Teh Ching” once more states the opening ideas of its first chapter, which say: “The Tao that can be told of / Is not the Absolute Tao; / The Names that can be given / Are not Absolute Names.” (CCA)



Lin Yutang and his anthology of classics, which includes the *Tao Teh Ching*

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On the role of the esoteric movement in the ethical awakening of mankind during the 21st century, see the book “**The Fire and Light of Theosophical Literature**”, by Carlos Cardoso Aveline.



Published in 2013 by **The Aquarian Theosophist**, the volume has 255 pages and can be obtained through [Amazon Book](#).

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