

Tao Te Ching

by Laozi

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Eighty-one short chapters of poetry and paradox, attributed to the sage Laozi, teach that the way that can be named is not the eternal way, and that softness overcomes hardness the way water wears down stone. The Tao Te Ching is the most translated Chinese book in the world. Read it slowly: it is short enough for one evening and large enough for a lifetime.

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Preface by James Legge

In the "Preface" to the third volume of these Sacred Books of the East (1879), I stated that I proposed giving in due course, in order to exhibit the System of Taoism, translations of the Tao Te Ching by Laozi (sixth century BC),¹ the Writings of Chuang-Tz (between the middle of the fourth and third centuries BC), and the Treatise of "Actions and Their Retributions" (of our eleventh century); and perhaps also of one or more of the other characteristic Productions of the System.

The two volumes now submitted to the reader are a fulfilment of the promise made so long ago. They contain versions of the three works which were specified, and, in addition, as appendixes, four other shorter treatises of Taoism; analyses of several of the books of Chuang-tz by Lin Hsi-chung; a list of the stories which form so important a part of those books; two essays by two of the greatest Scholars of China, written the one in AD 586 and illustrating the Taoistic beliefs of that age, and the other in AD 1078 and dealing with the four books of Chuang-tz, whose genuineness is frequently called in question. The concluding index is confined very much to proper names. For subjects the reader is referred to the tables of contents, the introduction to the books of Chuang-tz (vol. xxxix pp. 127-163), and the introductory notes to the various appendixes.²

The Treatise of Actions and Their Retributions exhibits to us the Taoism of the eleventh century in its moral or ethical aspects; in the two earlier works we see it rather as a philosophical speculation than as a religion in the ordinary sense of that term. It was not till after the introduction of Buddhism into China in our first century that Taoism began to organise itself as a religion, having its monasteries and nunneries, its images and rituals. While it did so, it maintained the superstitions peculiar to itself; some, like the cultivation of the Tao as a rule of life favourable to longevity, come down from the earliest times, and others which grew up during the decay of the Chou dynasty, and subsequently blossomed; now in mystical speculation; now in the pursuits of alchemy; now in the search for the pills of immortality and the elixir vitae; now in astrological fancies; now in visions of spirits and in magical arts to control them; and finally in the terrors of its purgatory and everlasting hell. Its phases have been continually changing, and at present it attracts our notice more as a degraded adjunct of Buddhism than as a development of the speculations of Laozi and Chuang-tz. Up to its contact with Buddhism, it subsisted as an opposition to the Confucian system, which, while admitting the existence and rule of the Supreme Being, bases its teaching on the study of man's nature and the enforcement of the duties binding on all men from the moral and social principles of their constitution.

It is only during the present century that the Texts of Taoism have begun to receive the attention which they deserve. Christianity was introduced into China by Nestorian missionaries in the seventh century; and from the Xi'an Monument, which was erected by their successors in 781, nearly 150 years after their first entrance, we perceive that they were as familiar with the books of Laozi and Chuang-tz as with the Confucian literature of the empire, but that monument is the only memorial of them that remains. In the thirteenth century the Roman Catholic Church sent its earliest missionaries to China, but we hardly know anything of their literary labours.

The great Romish mission which continue to the present day began towards the end of the sixteenth century; and there exists now in the India Office a translation of the Tao Te Ching in Latin, which was brought to English by a Mr. Matthew Raper, and presented by him to the Royal Society, of which he was a Fellow, on January 10th, 1788. The manuscript is in excellent preservation, but we do not know by whom the version was made. It was presented, as stated in the Introduction, par. 1, to Mr. Raper by P. de Grammont, Missionarius Apostolicus, ex-Jesuita. The chief object of the translator or translators was to show that "the Mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Incarnate God were anciently known to the

Chinese nation." The version as a whole is of little value. The reader will find, in endnote 108, its explanation of Lao's seventy-second chapter; the first morsel of it that has appeared in print.

Protestant missions to China commenced in 1807; but it was not till 1868 that the Rev. Dr. Chalmers, a member of one of them, published his *Speculations on Metaphysics, Polity, and Morality of "The Old Philosopher," Laozi*. Meanwhile, Abel-Rémusat had aroused the curiosity of scholars throughout Europe, in 1823, by his *Memoir on the Life and Opinions of Laozi, a Chinese Philosopher of the sixth century before our era*, who professed the opinions commonly attributed to Pythagoras, to Plato, and to their disciples. Rémusat was followed by one who had received from him his first lessons in Chinese, and had become a truly great Chinese scholar, the late Stanislas Julien. He published in 1842 "a complete translation for the first time of this memorable work, which is regarded with reason as the most profound, the most abstract, and the most difficult of all Chinese literature." Dr. Chalmers's translation was also complete, but his comments, whether original or from Chinese sources, were much fewer than those supplied by Julien. Two years later, two German versions of the treatise were published at Leipzig; by Reinhold von Plänckner and Victor von Strauss, differing much from each other, but both marked by originality and ability.

I undertook myself, as stated above, in 1879 to translate for *The Sacred Books of the East* the texts of Taoism which appear in these volumes; and, as I could find time from my labours on *The Texts of Confucianism*, I had written out more than one version of Lao's work by the end of 1880. Though not satisfied with the result, I felt justified in exhibiting my general views of it in an article in the *British Quarterly Review* of July, 1883.

In 1884 Mr. F. H. Balfour published at Shanghai a version of *Taoist Texts, Ethical, Political, and Speculative*. His Texts were ten in all, the *Tao Te Ching* being the first and longest of them. His version of this differed in many points from all previous versions; and Mr. H. A. Giles, of H.M.'s Consular Service in China, vehemently assailed it and also Dr. Chalmers's translation, in the *China Review* for March and April, 1886. Mr. Giles, indeed, occasionally launched a shaft also at Julien and myself; but his main object in his article was to discredit the genuineness and authenticity of the *Tao Te Ching* itself. "The work," he says, "is undoubtedly a forgery. It contains, indeed, much that Laozi did say, but more that he did not." I replied, so far as was necessary, to Mr. Giles in the same *Review* for January and February, 1888; and a brief summary of my reply is given in the second chapter of the Introduction in this volume. My confidence has never been shaken for a moment in the *Tao Te Ching* as genuine relic of Laozi, one of the most original minds of the Chinese race.

In preparing the version now published, I have used:

First, *The Complete Works of the Ten Philosophers*; a Suzhou reprint in 1804 of the best editions of the Philosophers, nearly all belonging more or less to the Taoist school, included in it. It is a fine specimen of Chinese printing, clear and accurate. The *Treatise of Laozi* of course occupies the first place, as edited by Kuei Yu-kuang (better known as Kuei Chên-chuan) of the Ming dynasty. The text and commentary are those of Ho-shang Kung (Introd., par. 7), along with the division of the whole into parts and eighty-one chapters, and the titles of the several chapters, all attributed to him. Along the top of the page, there is a large collection of notes from celebrated commentators and writers down to the editor himself.

Second, the *Text and Commentary of Wang Pi* (called also Fu-ss), who died AD 249, at the early age of twenty-four. See Introduction, par. 8.

Third, *Helps* (lit. *Wings*) to Laozi; by Chiao Hung (called also Jo-hou), and prefaced by him in 1587. This is what Julien calls "the most extensive and most important contribution to the understanding of Laozi, which we yet possess." Its contents are selected from the ablest writings on the *Treatise* from Han Fei

(Introd., par. 3) downwards, closing in many chapters with the notes made by the compiler himself in the course of his studies. Altogether the book sets before us the substance of the views of sixty-four writers on our short Ching. Julien took the trouble to analyse the list of them, and found it composed of three emperors, twenty professed Taoists, seven Buddhists, and thirty-four Confucianists or members of the literati. He says, "These last constantly explain Laozi according to the ideas peculiar to the school of Confucius, at the risk of misrepresenting him, and with the express intention of throttling his system;" then adding, "The commentaries written in such a spirit have no interest for persons who wish to enter fully into the thought of Laozi, and obtain a just idea of his doctrine. I have thought it useless, therefore, to specify the names of such commentaries and their authors."

I have quoted these sentences of Julien, because of a charge brought by Mr. Balfour, in a prefatory note to his own version of the Tao Te Ching, against him and other translators. "One prime defect," he says, though with some hesitation, "lies at the root of every translation that has been published hitherto; and this is, that not one seems to have been based solely and entirely on commentaries furnished by members of the Taoist school. The Confucian element enters largely into all; and here, I think, an injustice has been done to Laozi. To a Confucianist the Taoist system is in every sense of the word a heresy, and a commentator holding his opinion is surely not the best expositor. It is as a grammarian rather than as a philosopher that a member of the Ju Chia deals with the Tao Te Ching; he gives the sense of a passage according to the syntactical construction rather than according to the genius of the philosophy itself; and in attempting to explain the text by his own canons, instead of by the canons of Taoism, he mistakes the superficial and apparently obvious meaning for the hidden and esoteric interpretation."

Mr. Balfour will hardly repeat his charge of imperfect or erroneous interpretation against Julien; and I believe that is equally undeserved by most, if not all, of the other translators against whom it is directed. He himself adopted as his guide the Explanations of the Tao Te Ching, current as the work of Lü Yen (called also Lü Tsu, Lü Tung-pin, and Lü Chung-yang), a Taoist of the eighth century. Through Mr. Balfour's kindness I have had an opportunity of examining this edition of Lao's Treatise; and I am compelled to agree with the very unfavourable judgement on it pronounced by Mr. Giles as both "spurious" and "ridiculous." All that we are told of Lü Yen is very suspicious; much of it evidently false. The editions of our little book ascribed to him are many. I have for more than twenty years possessed one with the title of *The Meaning of the Tao Te Ching Explained by the True Man of Chung-yang*, being a reprint of 1690, and as different as possible from the work patronised by Mr. Balfour.

Fourth, the *Tai Shang Hsüan Yüan Tao Te Ching*, a work of the present dynasty, published at Shanghai, but when produced I do not know. It is certainly of the Lü Tsu type, and is worth purchasing as one of the finest specimens of block-printing. It professes to be the production of "The Immortals of the Eight Grottoes," each of whom is styled "a Divine Ruler (Ti Chün)." The eighty-one chapters are equally divided for commentary among them, excepting that "the Divine Ruler, the Universal Refiner," has the last eleven assigned to him. The text is everywhere broken up into short clauses, which are explained in a very few characters by "God, the True Helper," the same, I suppose, who is also styled, "The Divine Ruler, the True Helper," and comments at length on chapters 31 to 40. I mention these particulars as an illustration of how the ancient Taoism has become polytheistic and absurd. The name "God, the True Helper," is a title, I imagine, given to Lü Tsu. With all this nonsense, the composite commentary is a good one, the work, evidently, of one hand. One of the several recommendatory preface is ascribed to Wên Chang, the god of literature; and he specially praises the work, as "explaining the meaning by examination of the text."

Fifth, a *Collection of the Most Important Treatises of the Taoist Fathers* (Tao Tsu Chên Chuan Chi Yao).

This was reprinted in 1877 at Changzhou in Jiangsu; beginning with the Tao Te Ching, and ending with the Kan Ying Pien. Between these there are fourteen other treatises, mostly short, five of them being among Mr. Balfour's Taoist Texts. The collection was edited by a Lu Yü; and the commentary selected by him, in all but the last treatise, was by a Li Hsi-yüeh, who appears to have been a recluse in a monastery on a mountain in the department of Pao-ning, Sichuan, if, indeed, what is said of him be not entirely fabulous.

Sixth, the Commentary on the Tao Te Ching, by Wu Chêng (AD 1249-1333) of Lin Chuan. This has been of the highest service to me. Wu Chêng was the greatest of the Yüan scholars. He is one of the literati quoted from occasionally by Chiao Hung in his Wings; but by no means so extensively as Julien supposes ("Observations Détachées" p. xli). My own copy of his work is in the 12th section of the large Collection of the Yüeh-ya Hall, published in 1853. Writing of Wu Chêng in 1865 ("Proleg." to the Shu, p. 36), I said that he was "a bold thinker and a daring critic, handling his text with a freedom which I had not seen in any other Chinese scholar." The subsequent study of his writings has confirmed me in this opinion of him. Perhaps he might be characterised as an independent, rather than as a bold, thinking, and the daring of his criticism must not be supposed to be without caution. (See "Introd.," p. 9.)³

I have thus set forth all that is necessary to be said here by way of preface. For various information about the treatises comprised in the appendixes,⁴ the reader is referred to the preliminary notes, which preceded the translation of most of them. I have often sorely missed the presence of a competent native scholar who would have assisted me in the quest of references, and in talking over difficult passages. Such a helper would have saved me much time; but the result, I think, would scarcely have appeared in any great alteration of my versions.

J. L.

Oxford,

December 20, 1890.

Was Taoism Older Than Laozi?

In writing the preface to the third volume of these Sacred Books of the East in 1879, I referred to Laozi as "the acknowledged founder" of the system of Taoism. Prolonged study and research, however, have brought me to the conclusion that there was a Taoism earlier than his; and that before he wrote his Tao Te Ching, the principles taught in it had been promulgated, and the ordering of human conduct and government flowing from them inculcated.

For more than a thousand years "the Three Religions" has been a stereotyped phrase in China, meaning what we call Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The phrase itself simply means "the Three Teachings," or systems of instruction, leaving the subject-matter of each "Teaching" to be learned by inquiry. Of the three, Buddhism is of course the most recent, having been introduced into China only the first century of our Christian era. Both the others were indigenous to the country, and are traceable to a much greater antiquity, so that it is a question to which the earlier origin should be assigned. The years of Confucius's life lay between BC 551 and 478; but his own acknowledgement that he was "a transmitter and not a maker," and the testimony of his grandson, that "he handed down the doctrines of Yao and Shun (BC 2300), and elegantly displayed the regulations of Wên and Wu (BC 1200), taking them as his model," are well known.

Laozi's birth is said, in the most likely account of it, to have taken place in the third year of king Ting of the Chou dynasty, (BC) 604. He was thus rather more than fifty years older than Confucius. The two men seem to have met more than once, and I am inclined to think that the name Laozi, as the designation of the other, arose from Confucius's styling him to his disciples "The Old Philosopher." They met as heads of different schools or schemes of thought; but did not touch, so far as we know, on the comparative antiquity of their views. It is a peculiarity of the Tao Te Ching that any historical element in it is of the vaguest nature possible, and in all its chapters there is not a single proper name. Yet there are some references to earlier sages whose words the author was copying out, and to "sentence-makers" whose maxims he was introducing to illustrate his own sentiments.⁵ In the most distant antiquity he saw a happy society in which his highest ideas of the Tao were realised, and in the seventeenth chapter he tells us that in the earliest times the people did not know that there were their rulers, and when those rulers were most successful in dealing with them, simply said, "We are what we are of ourselves." Evidently mean existed to Laozi at first in a condition of happy innocence, in what we must call a paradisiacal state, according to his idea of what such a state was likely to be.

When we turn from the treatise of Laozi to the writings of Chuang-tz, the greatest of his followers, we are not left in doubt as to his belief in an early state of paradisiacal Taoism. Huang Ti, the first year of whose reign is placed in BC 2697, is often introduced as a seeker of the Tao, and is occasionally condemned as having been one of the first to disturb its rule in men's minds and break up "the State of Perfect Unity." He mentions several sovereigns of whom we can hardly find a trace in the records of history as having ruled in the primeval period, and gives us more than one description of the condition of the world during that happy time.⁶

I do not think that Chuang-tz had any historical evidence for the statements which he makes about those early days, the men who flourished in them, and their ways. His narratives are for the most part fictions, in which the names and incidents are of his own devising. They are no more true as matters of fact than the accounts of the characters in Bunyun's Pilgrim's Progress are true, with reference to any particular individuals; but as these last are grandly true of myriads of minds in different ages, so may we read in Chuang-tz's stories the thoughts of Taoistic men beyond the restrictions of place and time. He believed that those thoughts were as old as the men to whom he attributed them. I find in his belief a ground for

believing myself that to Taoism, as well as to Confucianism, we ought to attribute a much earlier origin than the famous men whose names they bear. Perhaps they did not differ so much at first as they came afterwards to do in the hands of Confucius and Laozi, both great thinkers, the one more of a moralist, and the other more of a metaphysician. When and how, if they were ever more akin than they came to be; their divergence took place, are difficult questions on which it may be well to make some remarks after we have tried to set forth the most important principles of Taoism.

Those principles have to be learned from the treatise of Laozi and the writings of Chuang-tz. We can hardly say that the Taoism taught in them is the Taoism now current in China, or that has been current in it for many centuries; but in an inquiry into the nature and origin of religions these are the authorities that must be consulted for Taoism, and whose evidence must be accepted. The treatise, *Actions and the Responses to Them*, will show one of the phases of it at a much later period.

The Texts of the Tao Te Ching and Chuang-Tz Shu , as Regards Their Authenticity and Genuineness, and the Arrangement of Them

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I will now state briefly, first, the grounds on which I accept the Tao Te Ching as a genuine production of the age to which it has been assigned, and the truth of its authorship by Laozi to whom it has been ascribed. It would not have been necessary a few years ago to write as if these points could be called in question, but in 1886 Mr. Herbert A. Giles, of Her Majesty's Consular Service in China, and one of the ablest Chinese scholars living, vehemently called them in question in an article in the China Review for the months of March and April. His strictures have been replied to, and I am not going to revive here the controversy which they produced, but only to state a portion of the evidence which satisfies my own mind on the two points just mentioned.

It has been said above that the year BC 604 was, probably, that of Laozi's birth. The year of his death is not recorded. Ss-ma Chien, the first great Chinese historian, who died in about BC 85, commences his Biographies with a short account of Laozi. He tells us that the philosopher had been a curator of the Royal Library of Chou, and that, mourning over the decadence of the dynasty, he wished to withdraw from the world, and proceeded to the pass or defile of Hangu,⁷ leading from China to the west. There he was recognised by the warden of the pass, Yin Hsi (often called Kuan Yin), himself a well-known Taoist, who insisted on his leaving him a writing before he went into seclusion. Laozi then wrote his views on The Tao and its Characteristics, in two parts or sections, containing more than 5,000 characters, gave the manuscript to the warden, and went his way;⁸ "nor is it known where he died." This account is strange enough, and we need not wonder that it was by and by embellished with many marvels. It contains, however, the definite statements that Laozi wrote the Tao Te Ching in two parts, and consisting of more than 5,000 characters. And that Chien was himself well acquainted with the treatise is apparent from his quotations from it, with, in almost every case, the specification of the author. He thus adduces part of the first chapter, and a large portion of the last chapter but one. His brief reference also to Laozi and his writings are numerous.

But between Laozi and Ss-ma Chien there were many Taoist writers whose works remain. I may specify of them Lieh-tz (assuming that his chapters, though not composed in their present form by him, may yet be accepted as fair specimens of his teaching); Chuang-tz (of the fourth century BC. We find him refusing to accept high office from king Wei of Chu, BC 339-299); Han Fei, a voluminous author, who died by his own hand in BC 230; and Liu An, a scion of the Imperial House of Han, king of Huai-nan, and better known to us as Huan-nan Tz, who also died by his own hand in BC 122. In the books of all these men we find quotations of many passages that are in our treatise. They are expressly said to be, many of them, quotations from Laozi; Han Fei several times all but shows the book beneath his eyes. To show how numerous the quotations by Han Fei and Liu An are, let it be borne in mind that the Tao Te Ching has come down to us as divided into eighty-one short chapters; and that the whole of it is shorter than the shortest of our Gospels. Of the eighty-one chapters, either the whole or portions of seventy-one are found in those two writers. There are other authors not so decidedly Taoistic, in whom we find quotations

from the little book. These quotations are in general wonderfully correct. Various readings indeed there are; but if we were sure that the writers did trust to memory, their differences would only prove that copies of the text had been multiplied from the very first.

In passing on from quotations to the complete text, I will clinch the assertion that Chien was well acquainted with our treatise, by a passage from the History of the Former Han Dynasty (BC 206-AD 24), which was begun to be compiled by Pan Ku, who died however in 92, and left a portion to be completed by his sister, the famous Pan Chao. The thirty-second chapter of his Biographies is devoted to Ss-ma Chien, and towards the end it is said that "on the subject of the Great Tao he preferred Huang and Lao to the six ching." "Huang and Lao" must there be the writings of Huang Ti and Laozi. The association of the two names also illustrates the antiquity claimed for Taoism, and the subject of endnote 4.

We go on from quotations to complete texts, and turn, first, to the catalogue of the Imperial Library of Han, as compiled by Liu Hsin, not later than the commencement of our Christian era. There are entered in it Taoist works by thirty-seven different authors, containing in all 993 chapters or sections (pien). Yi Yin, the premier of Chêng Tang (BC 1766), heads the list with fifty-one sections. There are in it four editions of Laozi's work with commentaries: by a Mr. Lin, in four sections; a Mr. Fu, in thirty-seven sections; a Mr. Hsü, in six sections; and by Liu Hsiang, Hsin's own father, in four sections. All these four works have since perished, but there they were in the Imperial Library before our era began. Chuang-tz is in the same list in fifty-two books or sections, the greater part of which have happily escaped the devouring tooth of time.

We turn now to the twentieth chapter of Chien's Biographies, in which he gives an account of Yüeh Yi, the scion of a distinguished family, and who himself played a famous part, both as a politician and military leader, and became prince of Wang-chu under the kingdom of Chao in BC 279. Among his descendants was a Yüeh Chên, who learned in Chi "the words," that is, the Taoistic writings "of Huang Ti and Laozi from an old man who lived on the ho-side." The origin of this old man was not known, but Yüeh Chên taught what he learned from him to a Mr. Ko, who again became preceptor to Tsao Tsan, the chief minister of Chi, and afterwards of the new dynasty of Han, dying in BC 190.

Referring now to the catalogue of the Imperial Library of the dynasty of Sui (AD 502-556), we find that it contained many editions of Lao's treatise with commentaries. The first mentioned is The Tao Te Ching, with the commentary of the old man of the ho-side, in the time of the emperor Wên of Han (BC 179-142). It is added in a note that the dynasty of Liang (AD 502-556) had possessed the edition of "the old man of the ho-side, of the time of the Warring States; but that with some other texts and commentaries it had disappeared." I find it difficult to believe that there had been two old men of the ho-side,⁹ both teachers of Taoism and commentators on our Ching, but I am willing to content myself with the more recent work, and accept the copy that has been current, say from BC 150, when Ss-ma Chien could have been little more than a boy. Taoism was a favourite study with many of the Han emperors and their ladies. Huai-nan Tz, of whose many quotations from the text of Lao I have spoken, was an uncle of the emperor Wên. To emperor Ching (BC 156-143), the son of Wên, there is attributed the designation of Lao's treatise as a ching, a work of standard authority. At the beginning of his reign, we are told, some one was commending to him four works, among which were those of Laozi and Chuang-tz. Deeming that the work of Huang-tz and Laozi was of a deeper character than the others, he ordered that it should be called a ching, established a board for the study of Taoism, and issued an edict that the book should be learned and recited at court, and throughout the country.¹⁰ Thenceforth it was so styled. We find Huang-fu Mi (AD 215-282) referring to it as the Tao Te Ching.

The second place in the Sui catalogue is given to the text and commentary of Wang Pi or Wang Fu-ss, an extraordinary scholar who died in AD 249, at the early age of twenty-four. This work has always been

much prized. It was its text which Lu Tê-ming used in his Explanation of the Terms and Phrases of the Classics, in the seventh century. Among the editions of it which I possess is that printed in 1794 with the imperial moveable metal types.

I need not speak of editions or commentaries subsequent to Wang Pi's. They soon begin to be many, and are only not so numerous as those of the Confucian Classics.

All the editions of the book are divided into two parts, the former called "Tao", and the latter "Tê," meaning the Qualities or Characteristics of the Tao, but this distinction of subjects is by no means uniformly adhered to.

I referred already to the division of the whole into eighty-one short chapters (37 + 44), which is by common tradition attributed to Ho-shang Kung, or "The old man of the ho-side." Another very early commentator, called Yen Tsun or Yen Chün-ping, made a division into seventy-two chapters (40 + 32), under the influence, no doubt, of some mystical considerations. His predecessor, perhaps, had no better reason for his eighty-one; but the names of his chapters were, for the most part, happily chosen, and have been preserved. Wu Chêng arranged the two parts in sixty-seven chapters (31 + 36). It is a mistake, however, to suppose, as even Mr. Wylie with all his general accuracy did,¹¹ that Wu "curtails the ordinary text to some extent." He does not curtail, but only rearranges according to his fashion, uniting some of Ho-shang Kung's chapters in one, and sometimes altering the order their clauses.

Ss-ma Chien tells us that, as the treatise came from Laozi, it contained more than 5,000 characters; that is, as one critic says, "more than 5,000 and fewer than 6,000." Ho-shang Kung's text has 5,350, and one copy 5,590; Wang Pi's, 5,683, and one copy 5,610. Two other early texts have been counted, giving 5,720 and 5,635 characters respectively. The brevity arises from the terse conciseness of the style, owing mainly to the absence of the embellishment of particles, which forms so striking a peculiarity in the composition of Mencius and Chuang-tz.

In passing on to speak, secondly and more briefly, of the far more voluminous writings of Chuang-tz, I may say that I do not know of any other book so ancient a date as the Tao Te Ching, of which the authenticity of the origin and genuineness of the text can claim to be so well substantiated.¹²

What Is the Meaning of the Name Tao? And the Chief Points of the Belief in Taoism

The first translation of the Tao Te Ching into a western language was executed in Latin by some of the Roman Catholic missionaries, and a copy of it was brought to England by a Mr. Matthew Raper, F.R.S., and presented by him to the Society at a meeting on the 10th January, 1788, being the gift to him of P. Jos. de Grammont, Missionarius Apostolicus, ex-Jesuita. In this version Tao is taken in the sense of "ratio," or the "supreme reason of the divine being, the creator and governor."

M. Abel-Rémusat, the first professor of Chinese in Paris, does not seem to have been aware of the existence of the above version in London, but his attention was attracted to Lao's treatise about 1820, and, in 1823, he wrote of the character Tao, "Ce mot me semble ne pas pouvoir être bien traduit, si ce n'est par le mot dans le triple sens de souverain Être, de raison, et de parole."

Rémusat's successor in the chair of Chinese, the late Stanislas Julien, published in 1842 a translation of the whole treatise. Having concluded from an examination of it, and the earliest Taoist writers, such as Chuang-tz, Ho-kuan Tz, and Ho-shang Kung, that the Tao was devoid of action, of thought, of judgement, and of intelligence, he concluded that it was impossible to understand by it "the primordial reason, or the sublime intelligence which created, and which governs the world," and to this he subjoined the following note: "Quelque étrange que puisse paraître cette idée de Laozi, elle n'est pas sans exemple dans l'histoire de la philosophie. Le mot nature n'a-t-il pas été employé par certains philosophes, que la religion et la raison condamnent, pour désigner une cause première, également dépourvue de pensée et d'intelligence?" Julien himself did not doubt that Lao's idea of the character was that it primarily and properly meant "a way," and hence he translated the title Tao Te Ching by *Le Livre de la Voie et de la Vertu*, transferring at the same time the name Tao to the text of his version.

The first English writer who endeavoured to give a distinct account of Taoism was the late Archdeacon Hardwick, while he held the office of Christian Advocate in the University of Cambridge. In his *Christ and Other Masters* (vol. ii p. 67), when treating of the religions of China, he says, "I feel disposed to argue that the centre of the system founded by Laozi had been awarded to some energy or power resembling the 'nature' of modern speculators. The indefinite expression Tao was adopted to denominate an abstract cause, or the initial principle of life and order, to which worshippers were able to assign the attributes of immateriality, eternity, immensity, invisibility."

It was, probably, Julien's reference in his note to the use of the term nature, which suggested to Hardwick his analogy between Laozi's Tao, and "the nature of modern speculation." Canon Farrar has said, "We have long personified under the name of nature the sum total of God's laws as observed in the physical world; and now the notion of nature as a distinct, living, independent entity seems to be ineradicable alike from our literature and our systems of philosophy."¹³ But it seems to me that this metaphorical or mythological use of the word nature for the cause and ruler of it, implies the previous notion of Him, that is, of God, in the mind. Does not this clearly appear in the words of Seneca?, "Vis illum (h.e. Jovem Deum) naturam vocare, non peccabis; hic est ex quo nata sunt omnia, cujus spiritu vivimus."¹⁴

In his translation of the Works of Chuang-Tz in 1881, Mr. Balfour adopted Nature as the ordinary rendering of the Chinese Tao. He says, "When the word is translated Way of Nature, her processes, her methods, and her laws; when translated Reason, it is the same as li, the power that works in all created things, producing, preserving, and life-giving, the intelligent principle of the world; when translated Doctrine, it refers to the true doctrine respecting the laws the mysteries of Nature." He calls attention also

to the point that "he uses nature in the sense of *Natura naturans*, while the Chinese expression *wan wu* (= all things) denotes *Natura naturata*." But this really comes to the metaphorical use of nature which has been touched upon above. It can claim as its patrons great names like those of Aquinas, Giordano Bruno, and Spinoza, but I have never been able to see that its barbarous phraseology makes it more than a figure of speech.¹⁵

The term Nature, however, is so handy, and often fits so appropriately into a version, that if Tao had ever such a signification I should not hesitate to employ it as freely as Mr. Balfour has done; but as it has not that signification, to try to put a non-natural meaning into it, only perplexes the mind, and obscures the idea of Laozi.

Mr. Balfour himself says, "The primary signification of Tao is simply 'road.'" Beyond question this meaning underlies the use of it by the great master of Taoism and by Chuang-tz.¹⁶ Let the reader refer to the version of the twenty-fifth chapter of Lao's treatise, and to the notes subjoined to it. There Tao appears as the spontaneously operating cause of all movement in the phenomena of the universe; and the nearest the writer can come to a name for it is "the Great Tao." Having established this name, he subsequently uses it repeatedly; see chh. xxxiv and liii. In the third paragraph of his twentieth chapter, Chuang-tz uses a synonymous phrase instead of Lao's "Great Tao," calling it the "Great Tu," about which there can be no dispute, as meaning "the Great Path," "Way," or "Course."¹⁷ In the last paragraph of his twenty-fifth book, Chuang-tz again sets forth the metaphorical origin of the name Tao. "Tao," he says, "cannot be regarded as having a positive existence; existences cannot be regarded as nonexistent. The name Tao is a metaphor used for the purpose of description. To say that it exercises some causation, or that it does nothing, is speaking of it from the phase of a thing; how can such language serve as a designation of it in its greatness? If words were sufficient for the purpose, we might in a day's time exhaust the subject of the Tao. Words not being sufficient, we may talk about it the whole day, and the subject of discourse will only have been a thing. Tao is the extreme to which things conduct us. Neither speech nor silence is sufficient to convey the notion of it. When we neither speak nor refrain from speech, our speculations about it reach their highest point."

The Tao therefore is a phenomenon; not a positive being, but a mode of being. Lao's idea of it may become plainer as we proceed to other points of his system. In the meaning time, the best way of dealing with it in translating is to transfer it to the version, instead of trying to introduce an English equivalent of it.

Next in importance to Tao is the name Tien, meaning at first the vaulted sky or the open firmament of heaven. In the Confucian Classics, and in the speech of the Chinese people, this name is used metaphorically as it is by ourselves for the Supreme Being, with reference especially to His will and rule. So it was that the idea of God arose among the Chinese fathers; so it was that they proceeded to fashion a name for God, calling Him Ti, and Shang Ti, "the Ruler," and "the Supreme Ruler." The Taoist fathers found this among their people; but in their idea of the Tao they had already a supreme concept which superseded the necessity of any other. The name Ti for God only occurs once in the Tao Te Ching; in the well-known passage of the fourth chapter, where, speaking of the Tao, Laozi says, "I do not know whose son it is; it might seem to be before God."

Nor is the name Tien very common. We have the phrase, "heaven and earth," used for the two great constituents of the cosmos, owing their origin to the Tao, and also for a sort of binomial power, acting in harmony with the Tao, covering, protecting, nurturing, and maturing all things. Never once is Tien used in the sense of God, the Supreme Being. In its peculiarly Taoistic employment, it is more an adjective than a noun. "The Tao of heaven" means the Tao that is heavenly, the course that is quiet and undemonstrative, that is free from motive and effort, such as is seen in the processes of nature, grandly

proceeding and successful without any striving or crying. The Tao of man, not dominated by this Tao, is contrary to it, and shows will, purpose, and effort, till, submitting to it, it becomes "the Tao or Way of the sages," which in all its action has no striving.

The characteristics both of heaven and man are dealt with more fully by Chuang than by Lao. In the conclusion of his eleventh book, for instance, he says: "What do we mean by Tao? There is the Tao (or Way) of heaven, and there is the Tao of man. Acting without action, and yet attracting all honour, is the Way of heaven. Doing and being embarrassed thereby is the Way of man. The Way of heaven should play the part of lord; the Way of man, the part of minister. The two are far apart, and should be distinguished from each other."

In his next book, (par. 2), Chuang-tz tells us what he intends by "Heaven:": "Acting without action, this is what is called heaven." Heaven thus taken its law from the Tao. "The oldest sages and sovereigns attained to do the same," it was for all men to aim at the same achievement. As they were successful, "vacancy, stillness, placidity, tastelessness, quietude, silence, and non-action" would be found to be their characteristics, and they would go on to the perfection of the Tao.¹⁸

The employment of Tien by the Confucianists, as of heaven by ourselves, must be distinguished therefore from the Taoistic use of the name to denote the quiet but mighty influence of the impersonal Tao; and to translate it by "God" only obscures the meaning of the Taoist writers. This has been done by Mr. Giles in his version of Chuang-tz, which is otherwise for the most part so good. Everywhere on his pages there appears the great name "God"; a blot on his translation more painful to my eyes and ears than the use of "Nature" for Tao by Mr. Balfour. I know that Mr. Giles's plan in translating is to use strictly English equivalents for all kinds of Chinese terms.¹⁹ The plan is good where there are in the two languages such strict equivalents; but in the case before us there is no ground for its application. The exact English equivalent for the Chinese tien is our heaven. The Confucianists often used tien metaphorically for the personal being whom they denominated Ti (God) and Shang Ti (the Supreme God), and a translator may occasionally, in working on books of Confucian literature, employ our name God for it. But neither Lao nor Chuang ever attached anything like our idea of God to it; and when one, in working on books of early Taoist literature, translates tien by God, such a rendering must fail to produce in an English reader a correct apprehension of the meaning.

There is also in Chuang-tz a peculiar usage of the name Tien. He applies it to the being whom he introduces as masters of the Tao, generally with mystical appellations in order to set forth his own views. Two instances from book XI will suffice in illustration of this. In par. 4, Huang-ti does reverence to his instructor Kuang Chên-tz,²⁰ saying, "In Kuang Chên-tz we have an example of what is called heaven," which Mr. Giles renders "Kuang Chên-tz is surely God." In par. 5, again, the mystical Yün-chiang is made to say to the equally fabulous and mystical Hung-mêng, "O heaven, have you forgotten me?" and, farther on, "O heaven, you have conferred on me (the knowledge of) your operation, and revealed to me the mystery of it;" in both passages Mr. Giles renders tien by "your holiness."

But Mr. Giles seems to agree with me that the old Taoist had no idea of a personal God, when they wrote of Tien or Heaven. On his sixty-eighth page, near the beginning of book VI, we meet with the following sentence, having every appearance of being translated from the Chinese text: "God is a principle which exists by virtue of its own intrinsicity, and operates without self-manifestation." By an inadvertence he has introduced his own definition of "God" as if it were Chuang-tz's; and though I can find no characters in the text of which I can suppose that he intends it to be the translation, it is valuable as helping us to understand the meaning to be attached to the great name in his volume.

I have referred above (par. 11) to the only passage in Lao's treatise, where he uses the name Ti or God in its highest sense, saying that "the Tao might seem to have been before him." He might well say so, for

his first chapter he describes the Tao, "(conceived of as) having no name, as the originator of heaven and earth, and (conceived of as) having a name, as the mother of all things." The reader will also find the same predicates of the Tao at greater length in his fifty-first chapter.

The character Ti is also of rare occurrence in Chuang-tz, excepting as applied to the five ancient Tis. In bk. III par. 4, and in one other place we find it indicating the Supreme Being, but the usage is ascribed to the ancients. In bk. XV par. 3, in a description of the human spirit, its name is said to be "Tung Ti", which Mr. Giles renders "Of God;" Mr. Balfour, "One with God;" while my own version is "The divinity in man." In bk. XII par. 6, we have the expression "the place of God;" in Mr. Giles, "the kingdom of God;" in Mr. Balfour, "the home of God." In this and the former instance, the character seems to be used with the ancient meaning which had entered into folklore of the people. But in bk. VI par. 7, there is passage which shows clearly the relative position of Tao and Ti in the Taoistic system; and having called attention to it, I will go on to other points. Let the reader mark well the following predicates of the Tao: "Before there were heaven and earth, form of old, there it was, securely existing. From it came the mysterious existence of spirits; from it the mysterious existence of Ti (God). It produced heaven, it produced earth."²¹ This says more than the utterance of Lao, that "the Tao seemed to be before God;" does it not say that Tao was before God, and that He was what He is by virtue of its operation?

Among the various personal names given to the Tao are those of Tsao Hua, "maker and transformer," and Tsao Wu Chê, "maker of things." Instances of both these names are found in bk. VI parr. 9, 10. "Creator" and "God" have both been employed for them; but there is no idea of creation in Taoism.

Again and again Chuang-tz entertains the question of how it was at the first beginning of things. Different views are stated. In bk. II par. 4, he says: "Among the men of old their knowledge reached the extreme point. What was that extreme point?

"Some held that at first there was not anything. This is the extreme point, the utmost limit to which nothing can be added.

"A second class held that there was something, but without any responsive recognition of it (on the part of man).

"A third class held that there was such recognition, but there had not begun to be any expression of different opinions about it. It was through the definite expression of different opinions about it that there ensued injury to the (doctrine of the) Tao."²²

The first of these three views was that which Chuang-tz himself preferred. The most condensed expression of it is given in bk. XII par. 8: "In the grand beginning of all things there was nothing in all the vacancy of space; there was nothing that could be name.²³ It was in this state that there arose the first existence; the first existence, but still without bodily shape. From this things could be produced, (receiving) what we call their several characters. That which had no bodily shape was divided, and then without intermission there was what we call the process of conferring. (The two processes) continued to operate, and things were produced. As they were completed, there appeared the distinguishing lines of each, which we call the bodily shape. That shape was the body preserving in it the spirit, and each had its peculiar manifestation which we call it nature."

Such was the genesis of things; the formation of heaven and earth and all that in them is, under the guidance of the Tao. It was an evolution and not a creation. How the Tao itself came, I do not say into existence, but into operation, neither Lao nor Chuang ever thought of saying anything about. We have seen that it is nothing material.²⁴ It acted spontaneously of itself. Its sudden appearance in the field of nonexistence, producer, transformer, beautifier, surpasses my comprehension. To Lao it seemed to be before God. I am compelled to accept the existence of God, as the ultimate Fact, bowing before it with

reverence, and not attempting to explain it, the one mystery, the sole mystery of the universe.

"The bodily shape was the body preserving in it the spirit, and each had its peculiar manifestation which we call its nature." So it is said in the passage quoted above Chuang-tz's twelfth book, and the language shows how Taoism, in a loose and indefinite way, considered man to be composed of body and spirit, associated together, yet not necessarily dependent on each other. Little is found bearing on his tenet in the Tao Te Ching. The concluding sentence of ch. 33, "He who dies and yet does not perish, has longevity," is of doubtful acceptance. More pertinent is the description of life as "a coming forth," and of death as "an entering;"²⁵ but Chuang-tz expounds more fully, though after all unsatisfactorily, the teaching of their system on the subject.

At the conclusion of his third book, writing of the death of Laozi, he says, "When the master came, it was at the proper time; when he went away, it was the simple sequence (of his coming). Quiet acquiescence in what happens at its proper time, and quietly submitting (to its sequence), afford no occasion for grief or for joy. The ancients described (death) as the loosening of the cord on which God suspended (the life). What we can point to are the faggots that have been consumed; but the fire is transmitted elsewhere, and we know not that it is over and ended."

It is, however, in connection with the death of his own wife, as related in the eighteenth book, that his views most fully, I do not say "clearly", appear. We are told that when that event took place, his friend Hui-tz went to condole with him, and found him squatted on the ground, drumming on the vessel (of ice), and singing. His friend said to him, "When a wife has lived with her husband, brought up children, and then dies in her old age, not to wail for her is enough. When you go on to drum on the vessel and sing, is it not an excessive (and strange) demonstration?" Chuang-tz replied, "It is not so. When she first died, was it possible for me to be singular, and not affected by the event? But I reflected on the commencement of her being, when she had not yet been born to life. Not only had she no life, but she had no bodily form. Not only had she no bodily form, but she had no breath. Suddenly in this chaotic condition there ensued a change, and there was breath; another change, and there was the bodily form; a further change, and she was born to life; a change no again, and she is dead. The relation between those changes is like the procession of the four seasons, spring, autumn, winter, and summer. There she lies with her face up, sleeping in the Great Chamber;²⁶ and if I were to fall sobbing and going on to wail for her, I should think I did not understand what was appointed for all. I therefore restrained myself."

The next paragraph of the same book contains another story about two ancient men, both deformed, who, when looking at the graves on Kunlun, begin to feel in their own frames the symptoms of approaching dissolution. One says to the other, "Do you dread it?" and gets the reply, "No. Why should I dread it? Life is a borrowed thing. The living frame thus borrowed is but so much dust. Life and death are like day and night."

In every birth, it would thus appear, there is, somehow, a repetition of what it is said, as we have seen, took place at "the grand beginning of all things," when out of the primal nothingness, the Tao somehow appeared, and there was developed through its operation the world of things, material things and the material body of man, which enshrines or enshrouds an immaterial spirit. This returns to the Tao that gave it, and may be regarded indeed as that Tao operating in the body during the time of life, and in due time receives a new embodiment.

In these notions of Taoism there was preparation for the appreciation by its followers of the Buddhistic system when it came to be introduced into the country, and which forms a close connection between the two at the present day, Taoism itself constantly becoming less definite and influential on the minds of the Chinese people. The book which tells us of the death of Chuang-tz's wife concludes with a narrative about Lieh-tz and an old bleached skull,²⁷ and to this is appended a passage about the metamorphoses

of things, ending with the statement that "the panther produces the horse, and the horse the man, who then again enters into the great machinery (of evolution), from which all things come forth (at birth) and into which they reenter (at death)." Such representations need not be characterised.

Chu Hsi, "the prince of literature," described the main object of Taoism to be "the preservation of the breath of life;" and Liu Mi, probably of our thirteenth century,²⁸ in his Dispassionate Comparison of the Three Religions, declared that "its chief achievement is the prolongation of longevity." Such is the account of Taoism originality given by Confucian and Buddhist writers, but our authorities, Lao and Chuang, hardly bear out this representation of it as true of their time. There are chapters of the Tao Te Ching which presuppose a peculiar management of the breath, but the treatise is singularly free from anything to justify what Mr. Balfour well calls "the antics of kung-fu, or system of mystic and recondite calisthenics." Lao insists, however, on the Tao as conducive to long life, and in Chuang-tz we have references to it as discipline of longevity, though even he mentions rather with disapproval "those who kept blowing and breathing with open mouth, inhaling and exhaling the breath, expelling the old and taking in new; passing their time like the (dormant) bear, and stretching and twisting (their necks) like birds." He says that "all this simply shows their desire for longevity, and is what the scholars who manage the breath, and men who nourish the body and wish to live as long as Pêng-tsu, are fond of doing."²⁹ My own opinion is that the methods of the Tao were first cultivated for the sake of the longevity which they were thought to promote, and that Lao, discountenancing such a use of them, endeavoured to give the doctrine a higher character; and this view is favoured by passages in Chuang-tz. In the seventh paragraph, for instance, of his book VI, speaking of parties who had obtained the Tao, he begins with a prehistoric sovereign, who "got and by it adjusted heaven and earth." Among his other instances in Pêng Tsu, who got it in the time of Shun, and lived on to the time of the five leading princes of Chou, a longevity of more than 1,800 years, greater than that ascribed to Methuselah! In the paragraph that follows there appear a Nü Yü, who is addressed by another famous Taoist in the words, "You are old, sir, while your complexion is like that of a child; how is it so?" and the reply is, "I became acquainted with the Tao."

I will adduce only one more passage of Chuang. In his eleventh book, and the fourth paragraph, he tells us of interviews between Huang-ti, in the nineteenth year of his reign, which would be BC 2679, and his instructor Kuang Chêng-tz. The Taoist sage is not readily prevailed on to unfold the treasures of his knowledge to the sovereign, but at last his reluctance is overcome, and he says to him, "Come, and I will tell you about the perfect Tao. Its essence is surrounded with the deepest obscurity; its highest reach is in darkness and silence. There is nothing to be seen, nothing to be heard. When it holds the spirit in its arms in stillness, then the bodily form will of itself become correct. You must be still, you must be pure; not subjecting your body to toil, not agitating your vital force; then you may live for long. When your eyes see nothing, your ears hear nothing, and your mind knows nothing, your spirit will keep your body, and the body will live long. Watch over what is within you; shut up the avenues that connect you with what is external; much knowledge is pernicious. I will proceed with you to the summit of the Grand Brilliance, where we come to the bright and expanding (element); I will enter with you the grate of the dark and depressing element. There heaven and earth have their controllers, there the yin and yang have their repositories. Watch over and keep your body, and all things will of themselves give it vigour. I main the (original) unity (of these elements). In this way I have cultivated myself for 1,200 years, and my bodily form knows no decay." Add 1,200 to 2,679, and we obtain 3879 as the year BC of Kuang Chêng-tz's birth!

Laozi describes some other and kindred results of cultivating the Tao in terms which are sufficiently startling, and which it is difficult to accept. In his fiftieth chapter he says, "He who is skilful in managing his life travels on land without having to shun rhinoceros or tiger, and enter a host without having 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." To the same effect he says in his fifty-fifth chapter, "He who has in himself abundantly the attributes (of the Tao) is like an infant. Poisonous insects will not sting him; fierce beasts will not seize him; birds of prey will not strike him."

Such assertions startle us by their contrariety to our observation and experience, but so does most of the teaching of Taoism. What can seem more absurd than the declaration that "the Tao does nothing, and so there is nothing that it does not do?" And yet this is one of the fundamental axioms of the system. The thirty-seventh chapter, which enunciates it, goes on to say, "If princes and kings were able to maintain (the Tao), all things would of themselves be transformed by them." This principle, if we can call it so, is generalised in the fortieth, one of the shortest chapters, and partly in rhyme:

"The movement of the Tao

By contraries proceeds;

And weakness marks the course

Of Tao's mighty deeds

All things under heaven sprang from it as existing (and named); that existence sprang from it as nonexistent (and not named)."

Ho-shang Kung, or whoever gave their names to the chapters of the Tao Te Ching, styles this fortieth chapter "Dispensing with the use (of means)." If the wish to use means arise in the mind, the nature of the Tao as "the nameless simplicity" has been vitiated; and this nature is celebrated in lines like those just quoted:

"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."

I do not cull any passages from Chuang-tz to illustrate these points. In his eleventh book his subject is government by "Let-a-be and the exercise of forbearance."

This Tao ruled men at first, and then the world was in a paradisiacal state. Neither of our authorities tells us how long this condition lasted, but as Lao observes in his eighteenth chapter, "the Tao ceased to be observed." Chuang-tz, however, gives us more than one description of what he considered the paradisiacal state was. He calls it "the age of perfect virtue." In the thirteenth paragraph of his twelfth book he says, "In this age, they attached no value to wisdom, nor employed men of ability. Superiors were (but) as the higher branches of a tree; and the people were like the deer of the wild. They were upright and correct, without knowing that to be so was righteousness; they loved one another, without knowing that to do so was benevolence; they were honest and leal-hearted, without knowing that it was loyalty; they fulfilled their engagements, without knowing that to do so was good faith; in their movements they employed the services of one another, without thinking that they were conferring or receiving any gift. Therefore their actions left no trace, and there was no record of their affairs."

Again, in the fourth paragraph of his tenth book, addressing an imaginary interlocutor, he says, "Are you, Sir, unacquainted with the age of perfect virtue?" He then gives the names of twelve sovereigns who ruled in it, of the greater number of whom we have no other means of knowing anything, and goes on: "In their times the people used knotted cords in carrying on their business. They thought their (simple)

food pleasant, and their (plain) clothing beautiful. They were happy in their (simple) manners, and felt at rest in their (poor) dwellings. (The people of) neighbouring states might be able to descry one another; the voices of their cocks and dogs might be heard from one to the other; they might not die till they were old; and yet all their life they would have no communication together. In those times perfect good order prevailed."

One other description of the primeval state is still more interesting. It is in the second paragraph of bk. IX:; "The people had their regular and constant nature:; they wove and made themselves clothes; they tilled the ground and got food. This was their common faculty. They were all one in this, and did not for themselves into separate classes; so were they constituted and left to their natural tendencies. Therefore in the age of perfect virtue men walked along with slow and grave step, and with their looks steadily directed forwards. On the hills there were no footpaths nor exacted passages; on the lakes there were no boats nor dams. All creatures lived in companies, and their places of settlement were made near to one another. Birds and beasts multiplied to flocks and herds; the grass and trees grew luxuriant and long. The birds and beasts might be led about without feeling the constraint; the nest of the magpie might be climbed to, and peeped into. Yes, in the age of perfect virtue, men lived in common with birds and beasts, and were on terms of equality with all creatures, as forming one family;; how could they know among themselves the distinctions of superior men and small men? Equally without knowledge, they did not leave the path of their natural virtue; equally free from desires, they were in the state of pure simplicity. In their pure simplicity, their nature was what it ought to be."

Such were the earliest Chinese of whom Chuang-tz could venture to give any account. If ever their ancestors had been in a ruder or savage condition, it must have been at a much antecedent time. These had long passed out of such a state; they were tillers of the ground, and acquainted with the use of the loom. They lived in happy relations with one another, and in kindly harmony with the tribes of inferior creatures. But there is not the slightest allusion to any sentiment of piety as animating them individually, or to any ceremony of religion as observed by them in common. This surely is a remarkable feature in their condition. I call attention to it, but I do not dwell upon it.

But by the time of Lao and Chuang the cultivation of the Tao had fallen into disuse. The simplicity of life which it demanded, with its freedom from all disturbing speculation and action, was no longer to be found in individual or in government. It was the general decay of manners and of social order which unsettled the mind Lao, made him resign his position as curator of the Royal Library, and determine to withdraw from China and hide himself among the rude peoples beyond it. The cause of the deterioration of the Tao and of all the evils of the nation was attributed to the ever-growing pursuit of knowledge, and of what we call the arts of culture. It had commenced very long before;; in the time of Huang-ti, Chuang says in one place;³⁰ and in another he carries it still higher to Sui-jên and Fu-hsi.³¹ There had been indeed, all along the line of history, a grouping for the rules of life, as indicated by the constitution of man's nature. The results were embodied in the ancient literature which was the lifelong study of Confucius. He had gathered up that literature; he recognised the nature of man as the gift of heaven or God. The monitions of God as given in the convictions of man's mind supplied him with a Tao or path of duty very different from the Tao or mysterious way of Lao. All this was gall and wormwood to the dreaming librarian or brooding recluse, and made him say, "If we could renounce our sageness and discard our wisdom, it would be better for the people a hundredfold. If we could renounce our benevolence and discard our righteousness, the people would again become filial and kindly. If we could renounce our artful contrivances and discard our (scheming for) gain, there would be no thieves nor robbers."³²

We can laugh at this. Taoism was wrong in its opposition to the increase of knowledge. Man exists under a law of progress. In pursuing it there are demanded discretion and justice. Moral ends must rule over

material ends, and advance in virtue be ranked higher than advance in science. So have good and evil, truth and error, to fight out the battle on the field of the world, and in all the range of time; but there is no standing still for the individual or for society. Even Confucius taught his countrymen to set too high a value on the examples of antiquity. The school of Laozi fixing themselves in an unknown region beyond antiquity, a prehistoric time between "the grand beginning of all things" out of nothing, and the unknown commencement of societies of men, has made no advance but rather retrograded, and is represented by the still more degenerated Taoism of the present day.

There is a short parabolic story of Chuang-tz, intended to represent the antagonism between Taoism and knowledge, which has always struck me as curious. The last paragraph of his seventh book is this: "The ruler (or god Ti) of the southern ocean was Shu (that is, Heedless); the ruler of the northern ocean was Hu (that is, Hasty); and the ruler of the centre was Hun-tun (that is, Chaos). Shu and Hu were continually meeting in the land of Hun-tun, who treated them very well. They consulted together how they might repay his kindness, and said, 'Men have all seven orifices for the purposes of seeing, hearing, eating, and breathing while this (poor) ruler along has not one. Let us try and make them for him.' Accordingly they dug one orifice in him every day; and at the end of seven days Chaos died."

So it was that Chaos passed away before light. So did the nameless simplicity of the Tao disappear before knowledge. But it was better that the Chaos should give place to the cosmos. "Heedless" and "Hasty" did a good deed.

I have thus set forth eight characteristics of the Taoistic system, having respect mostly to what is peculiar and mystical in it. I will not conclude my exhibition of it by bringing together under one head the practical lessons of its author for men individually, and for the administration of government. The praise of whatever excellence these possess belongs to Lao himself: Chuang-tz devotes himself mainly to the illustration of the abstruse and difficult points.

First, it does not surprise us that in his rules for individual man, Lao should place humility in the foremost place. A favourite illustration with him of the Tao is water. In his eighth chapter he says: "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 ground which all men dislike. Hence (its way) is near to that of the Tao." To the same effect in the seventy-eighth chapter: "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. 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."

In his sixty-seventh chapter Lao associates with humility two other virtues, and calls them his three Precious Things, or Jewels. They are gentleness, economy, and shrinking from taking precedence of others. "With that gentleness," he says, "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."

And in his sixty-third chapter, he rises to a still loftier height of morality. He says, "(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 the small as great, and the few as many, and to recompense injury with kindness."

Here is the grand Christian precept, "Render to no man evil for evil. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." We know that the maxim made some noise in its author's lifetime; that the disciples of Confucius consulted him about it, and that he was unable to receive it.³³ It comes in with less important matters by virtue of the Taoistic "rule of contraries." I have been surprised to find what little reference to it I have met with in the course of

my Chinese reading. I do not think that Chuang-tz takes notice of it to illustrate it after his fashion. There, however, it is in the Tao Te Ching. The fruit of it has yet to be developed.

Second, Lao laid down the same rule for the policy of the state as for the life of the individual. He says in his sixty-first chapter, "What makes a state great is its being like a low-lying, down-flowing stream; it becomes the centre to which tend all (the small states) under heaven." He then uses an illustration which will produce a smile; "Take the case of all females. The female always overcomes the male by her stillness. Stillness may be considered (a sort of) abasement." Resuming his subject, he adds, "Thus it is that a great state, by condescending to small states, gains them for itself; and that small states, by abasing themselves to a great state, win it over to them. In the one case the abasement tends to gaining adherents; in the other case, to procuring favour. The great state only wishes to unite men together and nourish them; a small state only wishes to be received by, and to serve, the other. Each gets what it desires, but the great state must learn to abase itself."

"All very well in theory," someone will exclaim, "but, the world has not seen it yet reduced to practice." So it is. The fact is deplorable. No one saw the misery arising from it, and exposed its unreasonableness more unsparingly, than Chuang-tz. But it was all in vain in his time, as it has been in all the centuries that have since rolled their course. Philosophy, philanthropy, and religion have still to toil on, "faint, yet pursuing," believing that in the time will yet come when humility and love shall secure the reign of peace and good will among the nations of men.

While enjoining humility, Lao protested against war. In his thirty-first chapter he says, "Arms, however beautiful, are instruments of evil omen; hateful, it may be said, to all creatures. They who have the Tao do not like to employ them." Perhaps in his sixty-ninth chapter he allows defensive war, but he adds, "There is no calamity greater than that of lightly engaging in war. To do that is near losing the gentleness which is so precious. Thus it is that when weapons are (actually) crossed, he who deplores the (situation) conquers."

There are some other points in the practical lessons of Taoism to which I should like to call the attention of the reader, but I must refer him for them to the chapters of the Tao Te Ching, and the books of Chuang-tz. Its salient features have been set forth somewhat fully. Notwithstanding the scorn poured so freely on Confucius by Chuang-tz and other Taoist writers, he proved in the course of time too strong for Lao as the teacher of their people. The entrance of Buddhism, moreover, into the country in our first century, was very injurious to Taoism, which still exists, but is only the shadow of its former self. It is tolerated by the government, but not patronised as it was when emperors and empresses seemed to think more of it than of Confucianism. It is by the spread of knowledge, which it had always opposed, that its overthrow and disappearance will be brought about ere long.

Accounts of Laozi and Chuang-Tz Given by Ss-Ma Chien

It seems desirable, before passing from Lao and Chuang in this "Introduction," to give a place in it to what is said about them by Ss-ma Chien. I have said that not a single proper name occurs in the Tao Te Ching. There is hardly an historical allusion in it. Only one chapter, the twentieth, has somewhat of an autobiographical character. It tells us, however, of no incidents of his life. He appears alone in the world through his cultivation of the Tao, melancholy and misunderstood, yet binding that Tao more closely to his bosom.

The books of Chunag-tz are of a different nature, abounding in pictures of Taoist life, in anecdotes and narratives, graphic, argumentative, often satirical. But they are not historical. Confucius and many of his disciples, Lao and members of his school, heroes and sages of antiquity, and men of his own day, move across his pages; but the incidents in connection with which they are introduced are probably fictitious, and devised by him "to point his moral or adorn his tale." His names of individuals and places are often like those of Bunyan in his Pilgrim's Progress or his Holy War, emblematic of their characters and the doctrines which he employs them to illustrate. He often comes on the stage himself, and there is an air of verisimilitude in his descriptions, possibly also a certain amount of fact about them; but we cannot appeal to them as historical testimony. It is only to Ss-ma Chien that we can go for this; he always writes in the spirit of a historian; but what he has to tell us of the two men is not much.

And first, as to his account of Laozi. When he wrote, about the beginning of the first century BC, the Taoist master was already known as Laozi. Chien, however, tells us that his surname was Li, and his name Êrh, meaning "Ear," which gave place after his death to Tan, meaning "Long-eared," from which we may conclude that he was named from some peculiarity in the form of his ears. He was a native of the state of Chu, which had then extended far beyond its original limits, and his birthplace was in the present province of Henan or of Anhui. He was a curator in the Royal Library; and when Confucius visited the capital in the year BC 517, the two men met. Chien says that Confucius's visit to Luoyang was that he might question Lao on the subject of ceremonies. He might have other objects in mind as well; but however that was, the two met. Li said to Kung, "The men about whom you talk are dead, and their bones are mouldered to dust; only their words are left. Moreover, when the superior man gets his opportunity, he mounts aloft; but when the time is against him, he is carried along by the force of circumstances.³⁴ I have heard that a good merchant, though he have rich treasures safely stored, appears as if he were poor; and that the superior man, though his virtue be complete, is yet to outward seeming stupid. Put away your proud air and many desires, your insinuating habit and wild will. They are of no advantage to you; this is all I have to tell you." Confucius is made to say to his disciples after the interview: "I know how birds can fly, fishes can swim, and animals run. But the runner may be snared, the swimmer hooked, and the flyer shot by the arrow. But there is the dragon; I cannot tell how he mounts on the wind through the clouds, and rises to heaven. Today I have seen Laozi, and can only compare him to the dragon."

In this speech of Confucius we have, I believe, the origin of the name Laozi, as applied to the master of Taoism. Its meaning is "The Old Philosopher," or "The Old Gentleman."³⁵ Confucius might well so style Li Êrh. At the time of this interview he was himself in his thirty-fifth year, and the other was in his eighty-eighth. Chien adds, "Laozi cultivated the Tao and its attributes, the chief aim of his studies being how to keep himself concealed and remain unknown. He continued to reside at (the capital of) Chou, but after a long time, seeing the decay of the dynasty, he left it and went away to the barrier-gate, leading out of the kingdom on the northwest. Yin Hsi, the warden of the gate, said to him, 'You are about to withdraw yourself out of sight. Let me insist on your (first) composing for me a book.' On this, Laozi wrote

a book in two parts, setting forth his views on the Tao and its attributes, in more than 5000 characters. He then went away, and it is not known where he died. He was a superior man, who liked to keep himself unknown."

Chien finally traces Lao's descendants down to the first century BC, and concludes by saying, "Those who attach themselves to the doctrine of Laozi condemn that of the literati, and the literati on their part condemn Laozi, verifying the saying, 'Parties whose principles are different cannot take counsel together.' Li Êrh taught that by doing nothing others are as a matter of course transformed, and that rectification in the same way ensues from being pure and still."

This morsel is all that we have of historical narrative about Laozi. The account of writing of the Tao Te Ching at the request of the warden of the barrier-gate has a doubtful and legendary appearance. Otherwise, the record is free from anything to raise suspicion about it. It says nothing about previous existences of Lao, and nothing of his travelling to the west, and learning there the doctrines which are embodied in his work. He goes through the pass out of the domain of Chou, and died no one knowing where.

It is difficult, however, to reconcile this last statement with a narrative in the end of Chuang-tz's third book. There we see Laozi dead, and a crowd of mourners wailing round the corpse, and giving extraordinary demonstration of grief, which offend a disciple of a higher order, who has gone to the house to offer his condolences on the occasion. But for the peculiar nature of most of Chuang-tz's narratives, we should say, in opposition to Chien, that the place and time of Lao's death were well known. Possibly, however, Chuang-tz may have invented the whole story, to give him the opportunity of setting forth what, according to his ideal of it, the life of a Taoist master should be, and how even Laozi himself fall short of it.

Second, Chien's account of Chuang-tz is still more brief. He was a native, he tells us, of the territory of Mêng, which belonged to the kingdom of Liang or Wei, and held an office, he does not say what, in the city of Chi-yüan. Chuang was thus of the same part of China as Laozi, and probably grew up familiar with all his speculations and lessons. He lived during the reigns of kings Hui of Liang, Hsüan of Chi, and Wei of Chu. We cannot be wrong therefore in assigning his period to the latter half of the third, and earlier part of the fourth century BC. He was thus a contemporary of Mencius. They visited at the same courts, and yet neither ever mentions the other. They were the two ablest debaters of their day, and fond of exposing what they deemed heresy. But it would only be a matter of useless speculation to try to account for their never having come into argumentative collision.

Chien says: "Chuang had made himself well acquainted with all the literature of his time, but preferred the views of Laozi, and ranked himself among his followers, so that of the more than ten myriads of characters contained in his published writings the greater part are occupied with metaphorical illustrations of Lao's doctrines. He made 'the old fisherman,' 'the robber of Chih,' and 'the cutting open satchels,' to satirize and expose the disciples of Confucius, and clearly exhibit the sentiments of Lao. Such names and characters as 'Wei-lei Hsü' and 'Kang-sang Tz' are fictitious, and the pieces where they occur are not to be understood as narratives of real events.³⁶

"But Chuang was an admirable writer and skilful composer, and by his instances and truthful descriptions hit and exposed the Mohists and literati. The ablest scholars of his day could not escape his satire nor reply to it, while he allowed and enjoyed himself with his sparkling, dashing style; and thus it was that the greatest men, even kings and princes, could not use him for their purposes.

"King Wei of Chu, having heard of the ability of Chuang-chou, sent messengers with large gifts to bring him to his court, and promising also that he would make him his chief minister. Chuang-tz, however, only

laughed and said to them, 'A thousand ounces of silver are a great gain to me, and to be a high noble and minister is most honourable position. But have you not seen the victim-ox for the border sacrifice? It is carefully fed for several years, and robed with rich embroidery that it may be fit to enter the Grand Temple. When the time comes for it to do so, it would prefer to be a little pig, but it cannot get to be so. Go away quickly, and do not soil me with your presence. I had rather amuse and enjoy myself in the midst of a filthy ditch than be subject to the rules and restrictions in the court of a sovereign. I have determined never to take office, but prefer the enjoyment of my own free will.'

Chien concludes his account of Chuang-tz with the above story, condensed by him, probably, from two of Chuang's own narratives, in par. 11 of bk. XVII, and 13 of XXXII, to the injury of them both. Paragraph 14 of XXXII brings before us one of the last scenes of Chung-tz's life, and we may doubt whether it should be received as from his own pencil. It is interesting in itself, however, and I introduce it here: "When Chuang-tz was about to die, his disciples signified their wish to give him a grand burial. 'I shall have heaven and earth,' he said, 'for my coffin and its shell; the sun and moon for my two round symbols of jade; the stars and constellations for my pearls and jewels; will not the provisions for my interment be complete? What would you add to them?' The disciples replied, 'We are afraid that the crows and kites will eat our master.' Chuang-tz rejoined, 'Above, the crows and kites will eat me; below, the mole-cricket and ants will eat me; to take from those and give to these would only show your partiality.'"

Such were among the last words of Chuang-tz. His end was not so impressive as that of Confucius; but it was in keeping with the general magniloquence and strong assertion of independence that marked all his course.

Chapter I

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.

(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.

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.

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.³⁷

Chapter II

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.

So it is that existence and nonexistence 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.

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

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.³⁸

Chapter III

Not to value and employ men of superior ability is the way to keep the people from rivalry among themselves; not to prize articles which are difficult to procure is the way to keep them from becoming thieves; not to show them what is likely to excite their desires is the way to keep their minds from disorder.

Therefore the sage, in the exercise of his government, empties their minds, fills their bellies, weakens their wills, and strengthens their bones.

He constantly (tries to) keep them without knowledge and without desire, and where there are those who have knowledge, to keep them from presuming to act (on it). When there is this abstinence from action, good order is universal.³⁹

Chapter IV

The Tao is (like) the emptiness of a vessel; and in our employment of it we must be on our guard against all fullness. How deep and unfathomable it is, as if it were the Honoured Ancestor of all things!

We should blunt our sharp points, and unravel the complications of things; we should attemper our brightness, and bring ourselves into agreement with the obscurity of others. How pure and still the Tao is, as if it would ever so continue!

I do not know whose son it is. It might appear to have been before God.⁴⁰

Chapter V

Heaven and earth do not act from (the impulse of) any wish to be benevolent; they deal with all things as the dogs of grass are dealt with. The sages do not act from (any wish to be) benevolent; they deal with the people as the dogs of grass are dealt with.

May not the space between heaven and earth be compared to a bellows?

'Tis emptied, yet it loses not its power;

'Tis moved again, and sends forth air the more.

Much speech to swift exhaustion lead we see;

Your inner being guard, and keep it free.⁴¹

Chapter VI

The valley spirit dies not, aye the same;
The female mystery thus do we name.
Its gate, from which at first they issued forth,
Is called the root from which grew heaven and earth.
Long and unbroken does its power remain,
Used gently, and without the touch of pain.⁴²

Chapter VII

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.

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?⁴³

Chapter VIII

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.

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.

And when (one with the highest excellence) does not wrangle (about his low position), no one finds fault with him.⁴⁴

Chapter IX

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.

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.⁴⁵

Chapter X

When the intelligent and animal souls are held together in one embrace, they can be kept from separating. When one gives undivided attention to the (vital) breath, and brings it to the utmost degree of pliancy, he can become as a (tender) babe. When he has cleansed away the most mysterious sights (of his imagination), he can become without a flaw.

In loving the people and ruling the state, cannot he proceed without any (purpose of) action? In the opening and shutting of his gates of heaven, cannot he do so as a female bird? While his intelligence reaches in every direction, cannot he (appear to) be without knowledge?

(The Tao) produces (all things) and nourishes them; it produces them and does not claim them as its own; it does all, and yet does not boast of it; it presides over all, and yet does not control them. This is what is called "The mysterious Quality" (of the Tao).⁴⁶

Chapter XI

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.⁴⁷

Chapter XII

Colour's five hues from th' eyes their sight will take;

Music's five notes the ears as deaf can make;

The flavours five deprive the mouth of taste;

The chariot course, and the wild hunting waste

Make mad the mind; and objects rare and strange,

Sought for, men's conduct will to evil change.

Therefore the sage seeks to satisfy (the craving of) the belly, and not the (insatiable longing of the) eyes.

He puts from him the latter, and prefers to seek the former.⁴⁸

Chapter XIII

Favour and disgrace would seem equally to be feared; honour and great calamity, to be regarded as personal conditions (of the same kind).

What is meant by speaking thus of favour and disgrace? Disgrace is being in a low position (after the enjoyment of favour). The getting that (favour) leads to the apprehension (of losing it), and the losing it leads to the fear of (still greater calamity);, this is what is meant by saying that favour and disgrace would seem equally to be feared.

And what is meant by saying that honour and great calamity are to be (similarly) regarded as personal conditions? What makes me liable to great calamity is my having the body (which I call myself); if I had not the body, what great calamity could come to me?

Therefore he who would administer the kingdom, honouring it as he honours his own person, may be employed to govern it, and he who would administer it with the love which he bears to his own person may be entrusted with it.⁴⁹

Chapter XIV

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.

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.

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.⁵⁰

Chapter XV

The skilful masters (of the Tao) in old times, with a subtle and exquisite penetration, comprehended its mysteries, and were deep (also) so as to elude men's knowledge. As they were thus beyond men's knowledge, I will make an effort to describe of what sort they appeared to be.

Shrinking looked they like those who wade through a stream in winter; irresolute like those who are afraid of all around them; grave like a guest (in awe of his host); evanescent like ice that is melting away; unpretentious like wood that has not been fashioned into anything; vacant like a valley, and dull like muddy water.

Who can (make) the muddy water (clear)? Let it be still, and it will gradually become clear. Who can secure the condition of rest? Let movement go on, and the condition of rest will gradually arise.

They who preserve this method of the Tao do not wish to be full (of themselves). It is through their not being full of themselves that they can afford to seem worn and not appear new and complete.⁵¹

Chapter XVI

The (state of) vacancy should be brought to the utmost degree, and that of stillness guarded with unwearying vigour. All things alike go through their processes of activity, and (then) we see them return (to their original state). When things (in the vegetable world) have displayed their luxuriant growth, we see each of them return to its root. This returning to their root is what we call the state of stillness; and that stillness may be called a reporting that they have fulfilled their appointed end.

The report of that fulfilment is the regular, unchanging rule. To know that unchanging rule is to be intelligent; not to know it leads to wild movements and evil issues. The knowledge of that unchanging rule produces a (grand) capacity and forbearance, and that capacity and forbearance lead to a community (of feeling with all things). From this community of feeling comes a kingliness of character; and he who is king-like goes on to be heaven-like. In that likeness to heaven he possesses the Tao. Possessed of the Tao, he endures long; and to the end of his bodily life, is exempt from all danger of decay.⁵²

Chapter XVII

In the highest antiquity, (the people) did not know that there were (their rulers). In the next age they loved them and praised them. In the next they feared them; in the next they despised them. Thus it was that when faith (in the Tao) was deficient (in the rulers) a want of faith in them ensued (in the people).

How irresolute did those (earliest rulers) appear, showing (by their reticence) the importance which they set upon their words! Their work was done and their undertakings were successful, while the people all said, "We are as we are, of ourselves!"⁵³

Chapter XVIII

When the Great Tao (Way or Method) ceased to be observed, benevolence and righteousness came into vogue. (Then) appeared wisdom and shrewdness, and there ensued great hypocrisy.

When harmony no longer prevailed throughout the six kinships, filial sons found their manifestation; when the states and clans fell into disorder, loyal ministers appeared.⁵⁴

Chapter XIX

If we could renounce our sageness and discard our wisdom, it would be better for the people a hundredfold. If we could renounce our benevolence and discard our righteousness, the people would again become filial and kindly. If we could renounce our artful contrivances and discard our (scheming for) gain, there would be no thieves nor robbers.

Those three methods (of government)

Thought olden ways in elegance did fail

And made these names their want of worth to veil;

But simple views, and courses plain and true

Would selfish ends and many lusts eschew.⁵⁵

Chapter XX

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)!

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).⁵⁶

Chapter XXI

The grandest forms of active force
From Tao come, their only source.
Who can of Tao the nature tell?
Our sight it flies, our touch as well.
Eluding sight, eluding touch,
The forms of things all in it crouch;
Eluding touch, eluding sight,
There are their semblances, all right.
Profound it is, dark and obscure;
Things' essences all there endure.
Those essences the truth enfold
Of what, when seen, shall then be told.
Now it is so; 'twas so of old.
Its name, what passes not away;
So, in their beautiful array,
Things form and never know decay.
How know I that it is so with all the beauties of existing things? By this (nature of the Tao).⁵⁷

Chapter XXII

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.

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.

That saying of the ancients that "the partial becomes complete" was not vainly spoken; all real completion is comprehended under it.⁵⁸

Chapter XXIII

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) actings last long, how much less can man!

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.

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).⁵⁹

Chapter XXIV

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.⁶⁰

Chapter XXV

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.

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.

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.

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.⁶¹

Chapter XXVI

Gravity is the root of lightness; stillness, the ruler of movement.

Therefore a wise prince, marching the whole day, does not go far from his baggage wagons. Although he may have brilliant prospects to look at, he quietly remains (in his proper place), indifferent to them. How should the lord of a myriad chariots carry himself lightly before the kingdom? If he do act lightly, he has lost his root (of gravity); if he proceed to active movement, he will lose his throne.⁶²

Chapter XXVII

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."

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."⁶³

Chapter XXVIII

Who knows his manhood's strength,
Yet still his female feebleness maintains;
As to one channel flow the many drains,
All come to him, yea, all beneath the sky.
Thus he the constant excellence retains;
The simple child again, free from all stains.
Who knows how white attracts,
Yet always keeps himself within black's shade,
The pattern of humility displayed,
Displayed in view of all beneath the sky;
He in the unchanging excellence arrayed,
Endless return to man's first state has made.
Who knows how glory shines,
Yet loves disgrace, nor e'er for it is pale;
Behold his presence in a spacious vale,
To which men come from all beneath the sky.
The unchanging excellence completes its tale;
The simple infant man in him we hail.
The unwrought material, when divided and distributed, forms vessels. The sage, when employed, becomes the Head of all the Officers (of government); and in his greatest regulations he employs no violent measures.⁶⁴

Chapter XXIX

If anyone 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.

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.⁶⁵

Chapter XXX

He who would assist a lord of men in harmony with the Tao will not assert his mastery in the kingdom by force of arms. Such a course is sure to meet with its proper return.

Wherever a host is stationed, briars and thorns spring up. In the sequence of great armies there are sure to be bad years.

A skilful (commander) strikes a decisive blow, and stops. He does not dare (by continuing his operations) to assert and complete his mastery. He will strike the blow, but will be on his guard against being vain or boastful or arrogant in consequence of it. He strikes it as a matter of necessity; he strikes it, but not from a wish for mastery.

When things have attained their strong maturity they become old. This may be said to be not in accordance with the Tao: and what is not in accordance with it soon comes to an end.⁶⁶

Chapter XXXI

Now arms, however beautiful, are instruments of evil omen, hateful, it may be said, to all creatures. Therefore they who have the Tao do not like to employ them.

The superior man ordinarily considers the left hand the most honourable place, but in time of war the right hand. Those sharp weapons are instruments of evil omen, and not the instruments of the superior man; he uses them only on the compulsion of necessity. Calm and repose are what he prizes; victory (by force of arms) is to him undesirable. To consider this desirable would be to delight in the slaughter of men; and he who delights in the slaughter of men cannot get his will in the kingdom.

On occasions of festivity to be on the left hand is the prized position; on occasions of mourning, the right hand. The second in command of the army has his place on the left; the general commanding in chief has his on the right; his place, that is, is assigned to him as in the rites of mourning. He who has killed multitudes of men should weep for them with the bitterest grief; and the victor in battle has his place (rightly) according to those rites.⁶⁷

Chapter XXXII

The Tao, considered as unchanging, has no name.

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.

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.

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.

The relation of the Tao to all the world is like that of the great rivers and seas to the streams from the valleys.⁶⁸

Chapter XXXIII

He who knows other men is discerning; he who knows himself is intelligent. He who overcomes others is strong; he who overcomes himself is mighty. He who is satisfied with his lot is rich; he who goes on acting with energy has a (firm) will.

He who does not fail in the requirements of his position, continues long; he who dies and yet does not perish, has longevity.⁶⁹

Chapter XXXIV

All-pervading is the Great Tao! It may be found on the left hand and on the right.

All things depend on it for their production, which it gives to them, not one refusing obedience to it. When its work is accomplished, it does not claim the name of having done it. It clothes all things as with a garment, and makes no assumption of being their lord; it may be named in the smallest things. All things return (to their root and disappear), and do not know that it is it which presides over their doing so; it may be named in the greatest things.

Hence the sage is able (in the same way) to accomplish his great achievements. It is through his not making himself great that he can accomplish them.⁷⁰

Chapter XXXV

To him who holds in his hands the Great Image (of the invisible Tao), the whole world repairs. Men resort to him, and receive no hurt, but (find) rest, peace, and the feeling of ease.

Music and dainties will make the passing guest stop (for a time). But though the Tao as it comes from the mouth, seems insipid and has no flavour, though it seems not worth being looked at or listened to, the use of it is inexhaustible.⁷¹

Chapter XXXVI

When one is about to take an inspiration, he is sure to make a (previous) expiration; when he is going to weaken another, he will first strengthen him; when he is going to overthrow another, he will first have raised him up; when he is going to despoil another, he will first have made gifts to him; this is called "Hiding the light (of his procedure)."

The soft overcomes the hard; and the weak the strong.

Fishes should not be taken from the deep; instruments for the profit of a state should not be shown to the people.⁷²

Chapter XXXVII

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

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

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.⁷³

Chapter XXXVIII

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

(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.

(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.

(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.

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.

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.

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.⁷⁴

Chapter XXXIX

The things which from of old have got the One (the Tao) are,
Heaven which by it is bright and pure;
Earth rendered thereby firm and sure;
Spirits with powers by it supplied;
Valleys kept full throughout their void
All creatures which through it do live
Princes and kings who from it get
The model which to all they give.

All these are the results of the One (Tao).
If heaven were not thus pure, it soon would rend;
If earth were not thus sure, 'twould break and bend;
Without these powers, the spirits soon would fail;
If not so filled, the drought would parch each vale;
Without that life, creatures would pass away;
Princes and kings, without that moral sway,
However grand and high, would all decay.

Thus it is that dignity finds its (firm) root in its (previous) meanness, and what is lofty finds its stability in the lowness (from which it rises). Hence princes and kings call themselves "Orphans," "Men of small virtue," and as "Carriages without a nave." Is not this an acknowledgement that in their considering themselves mean they see the foundation of their dignity? So it is that in the enumeration of the different parts of a carriage we do not come on what makes it answer the ends of a carriage. They do not wish to show themselves elegant-looking as jade, but (prefer) to be coarse-looking as an (ordinary) stone.⁷⁵

Chapter XL

The movement of the Tao

By contraries proceeds;

And weakness marks the course

Of Tao's mighty deeds.

All things under heaven sprang from It as existing (and named); that existence sprang from It as nonexistent (and not named).⁷⁶

Chapter XLI

Scholars of the highest class, when they hear about the Tao, earnestly carry it into practice. Scholars of the middle class, when they have heard about it, seem now to keep it and now to lose it. Scholars of the lowest class, when they have heard about it, laugh greatly at it. If it were not (thus) laughed at, it would not be fit to be the Tao.

Therefore the sentence-makers have thus expressed themselves;

"The Tao, when brightest seen, seems light to lack;

Who progress in it makes, seems drawing back;

Its even way is like a rugged track.

Its highest virtue from the vale doth rise;

Its greatest beauty seems to offend the eyes;

And he has most whose lot the least supplies.

Its firmest virtue seems but poor and low;

Its solid truth seems change to undergo;

Its largest square doth yet no corner show

A vessel great, it is the slowest made;

Loud is its sound, but never word it said;

A semblance great, the shadow of a shade."

The Tao is hidden, and has no name; but it is the Tao which is skilful at imparting (to all things what they need) and making them complete.⁷⁷

Chapter XLII

The Tao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things. All things leave behind them the Obscurity (out of which they have come), and go forward to embrace the Brightness (into which they have emerged), while they are harmonised by the Breath of Vacancy.

What men dislike is to be orphans, to have little virtue, to be as carriages without naves; and yet these are the designations which kings and princes use for themselves. So it is that some things are increased by being diminished, and others are diminished by being increased.

What other men (thus) teach, I also teach. The violent and strong do not die their natural death. I will make this the basis of my teaching.⁷⁸

Chapter XLIII

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).

There are few in the world who attain to the teaching without words, and the advantage arising from non-action.⁷⁹

Chapter XLIV

Of fame or life,
Which do you hold more dear?
Of life or wealth,
To which would you adhere?
Keep life and lose those other things;
Keep them and lose your life:, which brings
Sorrow and pain more near?
Thus we may see,
Who cleaves to fame
Rejects what is more great;
Who loves large stores
Gives up the richer state.
Who is content
Needs fear no shame.
Who knows to stop
Incurs no blame.
From danger free
Long live shall he.⁸⁰

Chapter XLV

Who thinks his great achievements poor

Shall find his vigour long endure.

Of greatest fullness, deemed a void,

Exhaustion ne'er shall stem the tide.

Do thou what's straight still crooked deem;

Thy greatest art still stupid seem,

And eloquence a stammering scream.

Constant action overcomes cold; being still overcomes heat. Purity and stillness give the correct law to all under heaven.⁸¹

Chapter XLVI

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 warhorses breed in the border lands.

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.⁸²

Chapter XLVII

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.

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.⁸³

Chapter XLVIII

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).

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.

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.⁸⁴

Chapter XLIX

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

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.

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.⁸⁵

Chapter L

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

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

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.

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.⁸⁶

Chapter LI

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.

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

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.

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.⁸⁷

Chapter LII

(The Tao) which originated all under the sky is to be considered as the mother of them all.

When the mother is found, we know what her children should be. When one knows that he is his mother's child, and proceeds to guard (the qualities of) the mother that belong to him, to the end of his life he will be free from all peril.

Let him keep his mouth closed, and shut up the portals (of his nostrils), and all his life he will be exempt from laborious exertion. Let him keep his mouth open, and (spend his breath) in the promotion of his affairs, and all his life there will be no safety for him.

The perception of what is small is (the secret of) clear-sightedness; the guarding of what is soft and tender is (the secret of) strength.

Who uses well his light,

Reverting to its (source so) bright,

Will from his body ward all blight,

And hides the unchanging from men's sight.⁸⁸

Chapter LIII

If I were suddenly to become known, and (put into a position to) conduct (a government) according to the Great Tao, what I should be most afraid of would be a boastful display.

The great Tao (or way) is very level and easy; but people love the byways.

Their court(-yards and buildings) shall be well kept, but their fields shall be ill-cultivated, and their granaries very empty. They shall wear elegant and ornamented robes, carry a sharp sword at their girdle, pamper themselves in eating and drinking, and have a superabundance of property and wealth; such (princes) may be called robbers and boasters. This is contrary to the Tao surely!89

Chapter LIV

What (Tao's) skilful planter plants

Can never be uptorn;

What his skilful arms enfold,

From him can ne'er be borne.

Sons shall bring in lengthening line,

Sacrifices to his shrine.

Tao when nursed within one's self,

His vigour will make true;

And where the family it rules

What riches will accrue!

The neighbourhood where it prevails

In thriving will abound;

And when 'tis seen throughout the state,

Good fortune will be found.

Employ it the kingdom o'er,

And men thrive all around.

In this way the effect will be seen in the person, by the observation of different cases; in the family; in the neighbourhood; in the state; and in the kingdom.

How do I know that this effect is sure to hold thus all under the sky? By this (method of observation).⁹⁰

Chapter LV

He who has in himself abundantly the attributes (of the Tao) is like an infant. Poisonous insects will not sting him; fierce beasts will not seize him; birds of prey will not strike him.

(The infant's) bones are weak and its sinews soft, but yet its grasp is firm. It knows not yet the union of male and female, and yet its virile member may be excited;, showing the perfection of its physical essence. All day long it will cry without its throat becoming hoarse;, showing the harmony (in its constitution).

To him by whom this harmony is known,

(The secret of) the unchanging (Tao) is shown,

And in the knowledge wisdom finds its throne.

All life-increasing arts to evil turn;

Where the mind makes the vital breath to burn,

(False) is the strength, (and o'er it we should mourn.)

When things have become strong, they (then) become old, which may be said to be contrary to the Tao. Whatever is contrary to the Tao soon ends.⁹¹

Chapter LVI

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.

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."

(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.⁹²

Chapter LVII

A state may be ruled by (measures of) correction; weapons of war may be used with crafty dexterity; (but) the kingdom is made one's own (only) by freedom from action and purpose.

How do I know that it is so? By these facts:, In the kingdom the multiplication of prohibitive enactments increases the poverty of the people; the more implements to add to their profit that the people have, the greater disorder is there in the state and clan; the more acts of crafty dexterity that men possess, the more do strange contrivances appear; the more display there is of legislation, the more thieves and robbers there are.

Therefore a sage has said, "I will do nothing (of purpose), and the people will be transformed of themselves; I will be fond of keeping still, and the people will of themselves become correct. I will take no trouble about it, and the people will of themselves become rich; I will manifest no ambition, and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity."⁹³

Chapter LVIII

The government that seems the most unwise,
Oft goodness to the people best supplies;
That which is meddling, touching everything,
Will work but ill, and disappointment bring.

Misery!, happiness is to be found by its side! Happiness!, misery lurks beneath it! Who knows what either will come to in the end?

Shall we then dispense with correction? The (method of) correction shall by a turn become distortion, and the good in it shall by a turn become evil. The delusion of the people (on this point) has indeed subsisted for a long time.

Therefore the sage is (like) a square which cuts no one (with its angles); (like) a corner which injures no one (with its sharpness). He is straightforward, but allows himself no license; he is bright, but does not dazzle.⁹⁴

Chapter LIX

For regulating the human (in our constitution) and rendering the (proper) service to the heavenly, there is nothing like moderation.

It is only by this moderation that there is effected an early return (to man's normal state). That early return is what I call the repeated accumulation of the attributes (of the Tao). With that repeated accumulation of those attributes, there comes the subjugation (of every obstacle to such return). Of this subjugation we know not what shall be the limit; and when one knows not what the limit shall be, he may be the ruler of a state.

He who possesses the mother of the state may continue long. His case is like that (of the plant) of which we say that its roots are deep and its flower stalks firm; this is the way to secure that its enduring life shall long be seen.⁹⁵

Chapter LX

Governing a great state is like cooking small fish.

Let the kingdom be governed according to the Tao, and the manes of the departed will not manifest their spiritual energy. It is not that those manes have not that spiritual energy, but it will not be employed to hurt men. It is not that it could not hurt men, but neither does the ruling sage hurt them.

When these two do not injuriously affect each other, their good influences converge in the virtue (of the Tao).⁹⁶

Chapter LXI

What makes a great state is its being (like) a low-lying, down-flowing (stream);, it becomes the centre to which tend (all the small states) under heaven.

(To illustrate from) the case of all females:, the female always overcomes the male by her stillness. Stillness may be considered (a sort of) abasement.

Thus it is that a great state, by condescending to small states, gains them for itself; and that small states, by abasing themselves to a great state, win it over to them. In the one case the abasement leads to gaining adherents, in the other case to procuring favour.

The great state only wishes to unite men together and nourish them; a small state only wishes to be received by, and to serve, the other. Each gets what it desires, but the great state must learn to abase itself.⁹⁷

Chapter LXII

Tao has of all things the most honoured place.

No treasures give good men so rich a grace;

Bad men it guards, and doth their ill efface.

(Its) admirable words can purchase honour; (its) admirable deeds can raise their performer above others. Even men who are not good are not abandoned by it.

Therefore when the sovereign occupies his place as the Son of Heaven, and he has appointed his three ducal ministers, though (a prince) were to send in a round symbol-of-rank large enough to fill both the hands, and that as the precursor of the team of horses (in the courtyard), such an offering would not be equal to (a lesson of) this Tao, which one might present on his knees.

Why was it that the ancients prized this Tao so much? Was it not because it could be got by seeking for it, and the guilty could escape (from the stain of their guilt) by it? This is the reason why all under heaven consider it the most valuable thing.⁹⁸

Chapter LXIII

(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.

(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.

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.⁹⁹

Chapter LXIV

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.

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.

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.

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).¹⁰⁰

Chapter LXV

The ancients who showed their skill in practising the Tao did so, not to enlighten the people, but rather to make them simple and ignorant.

The difficulty in governing the people arises from their having much knowledge. He who (tries to) govern a state by his wisdom is a scourge to it; while he who does not (try to) do so is a blessing.

He who knows these two things finds in them also his model and rule. Ability to know this model and rule constitutes what we call the mysterious excellence (of a governor). Deep and far-reaching is such mysterious excellence, showing indeed its possessor as opposite to others, but leading them to a great conformity to him.¹⁰¹

Chapter LXVI

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.

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.

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.¹⁰²

Chapter LXVII

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!

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.

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. Nowadays 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.

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.¹⁰³

Chapter LXVIII

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."¹⁰⁴

Chapter LXIX

A master of the art of war has said, "I do not dare to be the host (to commence the war); I prefer to be the guest (to act on the defensive). I do not dare to advance an inch; I prefer to retire a foot." This is called marshalling the ranks where there are no ranks; baring the arms (to fight) where there are no arms to bare; grasping the weapon where there is no weapon to grasp; advancing against the enemy where there is no enemy.

There is no calamity greater than lightly engaging in war. To do that is near losing (the gentleness) which is so precious. Thus it is that when opposing weapons are (actually) crossed, he who deplores (the situation) conquers.¹⁰⁵

Chapter LXX

My words are very easy to know, and very easy to practise; but there is no one in the world who is able to know and able to practise them.

There is an originating and all-comprehending (principle) in my words, and an authoritative law for the things (which I enforce). It is because they do not know these, that men do not know me.

They who know me are few, and I am on that account (the more) to be prized. It is thus that the sage wears (a poor garb of) hair cloth, while he carries his (signet of) jade in his bosom.¹⁰⁶

Chapter LXXI

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.

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.¹⁰⁷

Chapter LXXII

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

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

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

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.¹⁰⁸

Chapter LXXIII

He whose boldness appears in his daring (to do wrong, in defiance of the laws) is put to death; he whose boldness appears in his not daring (to do so) lives on. Of these two cases the one appears to be advantageous, and the other to be injurious. But

When Heaven's anger smites a man,

Who the cause shall truly scan?

On this account the sage feels a difficulty (as to what to do in the former case).

It is the way of Heaven not to strive, and yet it skilfully overcomes; not to speak, and yet it is skilful in (obtaining) a reply; does not call, and yet men come to it of themselves. Its demonstrations are quiet, and yet its plans are skilful and effective. The meshes of the net of Heaven are large; far apart, but letting nothing escape.¹⁰⁹

Chapter LXXIV

The people do not fear death; to what purpose is it to (try to) frighten them with death? If the people were always in awe of death, and I could always seize those who do wrong, and put them to death, who would dare to do wrong?

There is always One who presides over the infliction death. He who would inflict death in the room of him who so presides over it may be described as hewing wood instead of a great carpenter. Seldom is it that he who undertakes the hewing, instead of the great carpenter, does not cut his own hands!¹¹⁰

Chapter LXXV

The people suffer from famine because of the multitude of taxes consumed by their superiors. It is through this that they suffer famine.

The people are difficult to govern because of the (excessive) agency of their superiors (in governing them). It is through this that they are difficult to govern.

The people make light of dying because of the greatness of their labours in seeking for the means of living. It is this which makes them think light of dying. Thus it is that to leave the subject of living altogether out of view is better than to set a high value on it.¹¹¹

Chapter LXXVI

Man at his birth is supple and weak; at his death, firm and strong. (So it is with) all things. Trees and plants, in their early growth, are soft and brittle; at their death, dry and withered.

Thus it is that firmness and strength are the concomitants of death; softness and weakness, the concomitants of life.

Hence he who (relies on) the strength of his forces does not conquer; and a tree which is strong will fill the outstretched arms, (and thereby invites the feller.)

Therefore the place of what is firm and strong is below, and that of what is soft and weak is above.¹¹²

Chapter LXXVII

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.

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.

Who can take his own superabundance and therewith serve all under heaven? Only he who is in possession of the Tao!

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.¹¹³

Chapter LXXVIII

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.

Everyone 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.

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."

Words that are strictly true seem to be paradoxical.¹¹⁴

Chapter LXXIX

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)?

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.

In the Way of Heaven, there is no partiality of love; it is always on the side of the good man.¹¹⁵

Chapter LXXX

In a little state with a small population, I would so order it, that, though there were individuals with the abilities of ten or a hundred men, there should be no employment of them; I would make the people, while looking on death as a grievous thing, yet not remove elsewhere (to avoid it).

Though they had boats and carriages, they should have no occasion to ride in them; though they had buff coats and sharp weapons, they should have no occasion to don or use them.

I would make the people return to the use of knotted cords (instead of the written characters).

They should think their (coarse) food sweet; their (plain) clothes beautiful; their (poor) dwellings places of rest; and their common (simple) ways sources of enjoyment.

There should be a neighbouring state within sight, and the voices of the fowls and dogs should be heard all the way from it to us, but I would make the people to old age, even to death, not have any intercourse with it.¹¹⁶

Chapter LXXXI

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.

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.

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.¹¹⁷

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