

## Tao Te Ching

### 1. Tao

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The Tao that can be known is not Tao.  
The substance of the World is only a name for Tao.  
Tao is all that exists and may exist;  
The World is only a map of what exists and may exist.

One experiences without Self to sense the World,  
And experiences with Self to understand the World.  
The two experiences are the same within Tao;  
They are distinct only within the World.  
Neither experience conveys Tao  
Which is infinitely greater and more subtle than the World.

### 2. Qualities

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When Beauty is recognised in the World  
Ugliness has been learned;  
When Good is recognised in the World  
Evil has been learned.

In this way:  
Alive and dead are abstracted from growth;  
Difficult and easy are abstracted from progress;  
Far and near are abstracted from position;  
Strong and weak are abstracted from control;  
Song and speech are abstracted from harmony;  
After and before are abstracted from sequence.

The sage controls without authority,  
And teaches without words;  
He lets all things rise and fall,  
Nurtures, but does not interfere,  
Gives without demanding,  
And is content.

### 3. Control

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Not praising the worthy prevents cheating

Not esteeming the rare prevents theft  
Not flaunting beauty prevents lust

So the sage controls people by:  
Emptying their hearts,  
Filling their bellies,  
Weakening their ambitions,  
And strengthening their bodies.

If people lack knowledge and desire  
The crafty among them can not act;  
If no action is taken  
Then all live in peace.

#### 4. Properties of Tao

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Tao is a depthless vessel;  
Used by the Self, it is not filled by the World;  
It cannot be cut, knotted, dimmed or stilled;  
Its depths are hidden, ubiquitous and eternal;  
I don't know where it came from;  
It came before Nature.

#### 5. Nature

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Nature is not kind;  
It treats all things impartially.  
The Sage is not kind,  
And treats all people impartially.

Nature is like a bellows  
Empty, yet supplying all needs,  
The more it moves, the more it yields;  
The sage draws upon Tao in the same way  
And can not be exhausted.

#### 6. The Heart

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Like a riverbed, the heart is never filled  
It is an ineffable female  
Whose entrance is the source of the World;  
Tao is ever present within it:  
Draw upon it and it will never fail.

## 7. Self

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Nature is everlasting because it does not have a Self.

In this way the sage:  
Serves his Self last and finds it served first;  
Sees his body as accidental and finds it endures.

Because he does not serve his Self, he is content.

## 8. Intimacy

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The best of man is like water,  
Which benefits all things, and does not contend with them,  
Which flows in places that others disdain,  
Where it holds fast to Tao.

So the sage:  
In dwelling holds fast to the land,  
In governing holds fast to order,  
In talking holds fast to truth,  
In dealing holds fast to men,  
In acting holds fast to opportunity,  
In crafting holds fast to competence,  
In feeling holds fast to the heart;  
He does not contend, and so is without blame.

## 9. Hubris

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Stretch a bow to its limit and it is soon broken;  
Temper a blade to its sharpest and it is soon blunted;  
Amass the greatest treasure and it is soon stolen;  
Claim credit and honour and you will soon fall;  
Retire once your purpose is achieved - this is the way of Nature.

## 10. Love

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Embracing Tao, you become embraced.  
Supple, breathing gently, you become reborn.  
Clearing your vision, you become clear.  
Nurturing your beloved, you become impartial.

Opening your heart, you become accepted.  
Accepting the World, you embrace Tao.

Bearing and nurturing,  
Creating but not owning,  
Giving without demanding,  
Controlling without authority,  
This is love.

### 11. Wealth and Worth

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Thirty spokes meet at a nave;  
Because of the hole we may use the wheel.  
Clay is moulded into a vessel;  
Because of the hollow we may use the cup.  
Walls are built around a hearth  
Because of the doors we may use the house.  
Thus wealth comes from what is,  
But worth from what is not.

### 12. Distraction

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Too much color blinds the eye  
Too much tone deafens the ear  
Too much taste dulls the palate  
Too much play maddens the mind  
Too much desire tears the heart.

The sage provides for the belly, not for the senses;  
He lets go of sensation and accepts substance.

### 13. Anxiety

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The saints said: "Praise and blame cause anxiety;  
The objects of hope and fear are within your Self."

"Praise and blame cause anxiety"  
For you must hope and fear to receive or to lose them.

"The objects of hope and fear are within your Self"  
For, without Self, neither fortune nor disaster can befall.

Therefore:

He who regards the World as the Self is able to control the World;  
He who loves the World as the Self is able to nurture the World.

#### 14. The Continuity of Tao

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Looked at but cannot be seen - it is beyond form;  
Listened to but cannot be heard - it is beyond sound;  
Grasped at but cannot be touched - it is beyond reach;  
These depthless things evade definition,  
And blend into a single mystery.

In its rising there is no light,  
In its falling there is no darkness,  
A continuous thread beyond description,  
Lining what can not exist,  
Its form formless,  
Its image nothing,  
Its name mystery,  
Meet it, it has no face,  
Follow it, it has no back.

Understand the past, but attend the present;  
In this way you know the continuity of Tao,  
Which is its essence.

#### 15. The Saints

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The Saints had understanding  
So profound they can not be understood.

Because they cannot be understood  
I can only describe their appearance:  
Cautious, like one crossing thin ice,  
Hesitant, like one who fears danger,  
Modest, like one who is a guest,  
Smooth, like melting ice,  
Genuine, like unshaped wood,  
Empty, like a riverbed,  
Opaque, like muddy water.

He who can lie still while the mud settles,  
And remain still until the water flows  
Does not seek fulfillment  
And transcends Nature.

## 16. Transcending Nature

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Empty the Self completely;  
Embrace perfect peace.  
The World will rise and move;  
Watch it return to rest.  
All the flourishing things  
Will return to their source.

This return is peaceful;  
It is the way of Nature,  
An eternal decay and renewal.  
Understanding this brings enlightenment,  
Ignorance of this brings misery.

Who understands Nature's way becomes all-cherishing;  
Being all-cherishing he becomes impartial;  
Being impartial he becomes magnanimous;  
Being magnanimous he becomes part of Nature;  
Being part of Nature he becomes one with Tao;  
Being one with Tao he becomes immortal:  
Though his body will decay, Tao will not.

## 17. Rulers

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The best rulers are scarcely known by their subjects;  
The next best are loved and praised;  
The next are feared;  
The next despised:  
They have no faith in their subjects,  
So their subjects become unfaithful to them.

When the best rulers achieve their purpose  
Their subjects claim the achievement as their own.

## 18. Loss of Tao

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When Tao is forgotten  
Duty and justice arise;  
Then wisdom and sagacity are born  
Along with hypocrisy.

When family relationships dissolve  
Then respect and devotion arise;  
When a nation falls to chaos  
Then loyalty and patriotism are born.

#### 19. Simplicity

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If we could discard wisdom and sagacity  
Then people would profit a hundredfold;  
If we could discard duty and justice  
Then loving relationships would form;  
If we could discard artifice and profit  
Then corruption and theft would disappear -  
Yet such remedies treat only symptoms  
And so they are inadequate.

People need personal remedies:  
Reveal your naked Self,  
Embrace your original nature,  
Bind your self-interest,  
Control your desire.

#### 20. Oneness

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I know nothing and nothing troubles me.  
I see no difference between yes and no.  
I see no difference between good and evil.  
I do not fear what the people fear in the night.

The people are merry as if at a magnificent party  
Or playing in the park at springtime;  
But I am tranquil and wandering,  
Like a newborn before it learns to smile,  
Lonely, with no true home.

The people have enough and to spare,  
But I have nothing,  
And my heart is foolish,  
Muddled and cloudy.

The people are bright and certain,  
Where I am dim and confused;  
The people are clever and wise,  
Where I am dull and ignorant,

Aimless as a wave drifting over the sea,  
Attached to nothing.

The people are busy with purpose,  
Where I am impractical and rough.  
I am apart from all other people  
Yet I am sustained by Nature, their mother.

## 21. Expressions of Tao

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Love is expressed by following Tao.

Tao is evasive and intangible  
But expresses all form and substance;  
Tao is dark and subtle  
But expresses all of Nature;  
Nature is unchanging,  
But expresses all sensation.

Since before knowledge  
Tao has expressed these things.  
How do I know?  
By faith in my senses.

## 22. Acceptance and Contentment

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Accept and you become whole,  
Bend and you straighten,  
Empty and you fill,  
Decay and you renew,  
Want and you acquire,  
Fulfill and you become confused.

The sage accepts the World  
As the World accepts Tao;  
He does not display himself, so is clearly seen,  
Does not justify himself, so is famed,  
Does not boast, so is credited,  
Does not glory, so excels,  
Does not contend, so no one contends against him.

The saints said, "Accept and you become whole",  
Once whole, the World is as your home.



### 23. Talk and Trust

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Nature says only a few words:  
High wind does not last long,  
Nor does heavy rain.  
If Nature's words do not last  
Why should those of man?

To follow Tao, become Tao; Tao will accept you.  
To give love, become love; love will accept you.  
To lose Tao, become lost; loss will accept you.  
You must trust in order to be trusted.

### 24. Tumors

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If you stand on tiptoe you can not stand steady;  
If you stride too long you can not stride well;  
If you display yourself you can not be clearly seen;  
If you justify yourself you can not be respected;  
If you promote yourself you can not be believed;  
If you pride yourself you can not excel.  
These behaviours are dregs and tumors,  
Disgusting things avoided by love.

### 25. Four Infinities.

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Before the World exists  
There is mystery:  
Silent, depthless,  
Alone, unchanging,  
Ubiquitous and ever moving,  
The mother of the World.  
I do not know its name, so I call it Tao;  
I do not know its limit, so I call it infinite.

Being infinite, it flows away forever  
Flowing away forever, it returns to the Self.

The Self follows the way of the World;  
The World follows the way of Nature;  
Nature follows the way of Tao;  
Tao is the way.

Tao is infinite,  
Therefore Nature is infinite,  
Therefore the World is infinite,  
Therefore the Self is infinite.  
There are four infinities,  
And the Self is one of them.

#### 26. Calm

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Gravity is the source of Lightness,  
Calm, the master of Haste

So the leader of a great enterprise should not act lightly or hastily.  
Acting lightly, he loses touch with the World,  
Acting hastily, he loses control of the Self.

The sage journeys all day without losing control;  
Surrounded by desirable things, he is calm and unattached.

#### 27. Attention

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A good traveller leaves no trail to be followed  
A good speaker leaves no question to be asked  
A good accountant leaves no working to be checked  
A good container leaves no lock to be picked  
A good fastener leaves no knot to be unravelled

So the sage nurtures all men  
And abandons no one.  
He accepts everything  
And rejects nothing.  
He attends to the smallest details.

So the strong must guide the weak,  
For the weak are raw material to the strong.  
If the guide is not respected  
Or the material is not nurtured  
Confusion will result, no matter how clever one is.  
This is the essence of subtlety.

#### 28. Being the Female

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Knowing the male, being the female,

Being the course through which flows the World,  
One embraces unfailing Love  
And is again as a newborn.

Knowing the light, being the dark,  
Being the World,  
One becomes unerring Love  
And returns to Tao.

Knowing honour, being humble,  
Being the valley of the World,  
Love suffices,  
And one is as unshaped wood.

When wood is shaped it becomes tools.  
Used by the sage, tools become powerful;  
So a good carpenter wastes little.

#### 29. Blindness

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Those who wish to change the World  
According with their desire  
Cannot succeed.

The World is shaped by Tao;  
It cannot be shaped by Self.  
If one tries to shape it, one damages it;  
If one tries to possess it, one loses it.

Therefore:  
Sometimes things flourish,  
And sometimes they do not.  
Sometimes life is hard  
And sometimes it is easy.  
Sometimes people are strong  
And sometimes they are weak.  
Sometimes you get where you are going  
And sometimes you fall by the way.

The sage is not extreme, extravagant, or complacent.

#### 30. Violence

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Powerful men are well advised not to use violence,

For violence has a habit of returning;  
Thorns and weeds grow wherever an army goes,  
And lean years follow a great war.

A general is well advised  
To achieve nothing more than his orders,  
No matter how strong his army;  
To carry out his orders  
But not glory, boast or be proud;  
To do what is dictated by necessity,  
But not by bloodlust;  
For even the fiercest force will weaken with time,  
And then its violence will return, and kill it.

### 31. Tools of Violence

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Soldiers are tools of violence, feared by all;  
The sage will not employ them.  
His purpose is creation;  
Their purpose is destruction.

Weapons are tools of violence, not of the wise man;  
He uses them when there is no choice  
For he values peace and tact,  
And does not delight in conquest.

For who delights in conquest  
Delights in the slaughter of men;  
And who delights in the slaughter of men  
Cannot control them.

Slaughters should be mourned  
And conquest celebrated with a funeral.

### 32. Shape

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Tao has no true definition.  
Like unshaped wood, it has no use;  
If a ruler understands this  
His whole country flourishes and obeys  
In harmony with his Self,  
Just as sweet rain falls  
Needing no instruction  
To slake the thirst of all.

When Tao is shaped by use,  
The shape gains a name in the World;  
One should not keep too many names  
Lest their shapes stop up the Self;  
Instead let Tao flow through the Self into the World  
As water courses down a riverbed into the sea.

### 33. Virtue

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Who understands the World is learned;  
Who understands the Self is enlightened.  
Who conquers the World has strength;  
Who conquers the Self has love.  
Who is contented has riches;  
Who is determined has purpose.  
Who maintains his home will long endure  
Who maintains his influence will live long after death.

### 34. Tao Favours No One

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Infinite Tao flows everywhere, creating and destroying,  
Implementing all the World, attending to the tiniest details,  
Claiming nothing in return.

It nurtures all things,  
Though it does not control them;  
It has no intention,  
So it seems inconsequential.

It is the substance of all things;  
Though it does not control them;  
It has no exception,  
So it seems all-important.

Because it favours no finite thing,  
It is infinite.

### 35. Peace

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Tao lacks art and flavour;  
It can neither be seen nor heard,  
Yet its application cannot be exhausted.

If you offer music and food  
Strangers may stop with you;  
But if you accord with Tao  
The people of the World will keep you  
In safety, health, community, and peace.

### 36. Influence

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To reduce someone's influence, first cause it to expand;  
To reduce someone's force, first cause it to increase;  
To overthrow someone, first cause them to be exalted;  
To take something from someone, first give it to them.

This is the subtlety by which the weak overcome the strong,  
For fish should not leave their depths;  
And soldiers should not leave their camouflage.

### 37. Quieting the Heart

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Tao does not act, yet leaves nothing undone.  
If the Self understands this  
All the things of the World naturally flourish;  
Flourishing, they are constrained by Nature.

Nature does not possess desire;  
Without desire, the heart becomes quiet,  
And so the whole World may be made tranquil.

### 38. Religion

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The loving do not act.  
The kind act without self-interest;  
The just act to serve self-interest;  
The religious act to reproduce self-interest.

For when Tao is lost, there is love;  
When love is lost, there is kindness;  
When kindness is lost, there is justice;  
And when justice is lost, there is religion.

Well established hierarchies are not easily uprooted;

Closely held beliefs are not easily released;  
So religion enralls generation after generation.

Religion is the end of love and honesty,  
The beginning of confusion;  
Faith is a colourful hope or fear,  
The origin of folly.

The sage goes by knowledge, not by hope;  
He dwells in the fruit, not the flower;  
He accepts the former, and rejects the latter.

### 39. Wholeness

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In mythical times all things were whole:  
All the sky was clear,  
All the earth was stable,  
All the mountains were strong,  
All the riverbeds were full,  
All of nature was alive,  
And all the rulers were supported.

But without clarity, the sky tears;  
Without stability, the earth splits;  
Without strength, the mountain collapses;  
Without water, the riverbed cracks;  
Without life, nature is barren;  
And without support, the rulers fall.

So rulers depend upon their subjects,  
The noble depend upon the humble;  
And rulers call themselves orphaned, lonely or disabled,  
To win their peoples' support.

Wholeness gains no support.  
So there is weakness in power,  
And power in weakness;  
Rather than tinkle like jade,  
One should clatter like stones.

### 40. Application of Tao

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The motion of Tao is to return;  
The use of Tao is to accept;

All things are made of Tao,  
And Tao is made of nothing.

#### 41. Taoism

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When the strong learn Tao, they practice it diligently;  
When the average learn Tao, they practice it sometimes;  
When the weak learn Tao, they laugh out loud;  
Those who do not laugh do not learn at all.

Therefore it is said:  
Who understands Tao seems foolish;  
Who progresses in Tao seems to fail;  
Who follows Tao seems to wander.

So the greatest force appears vulnerable;  
The brightest truth appears coloured;  
The richest character appears incomplete;  
The strongest heart appears meek;  
The most beautiful nature appears fickle;

So the square, perfected, has no corner;  
Art, perfected, has no meaning;  
Sex, perfected, has no climax;  
Form, perfected, has no shape.

So Tao can not be sensed or known:  
It transmits sensation and transcends knowledge.

#### 42. Harmony

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Tao bears love;  
Love bears restraint;  
Restraint bears acceptance;  
Acceptance bears the World;  
All things begin with love and end with restraint,  
But it is acceptance that brings harmony.

As others teach, I teach,  
"Those without harmony end with violence";  
This is my teacher.

#### 43. Overcoming the Impossible

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The soft overcomes the hard;  
The formless penetrates the impenetrable;  
Therefore I value taking no action.

Teaching without words,  
Work without action,  
Are understood by no one.

#### 44. Contentment

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Fame or Self: which is dearer?  
Self or wealth: which is more valuable?  
Profit or loss: which is more painful?

Great love incurs great expense,  
And great wealth incurs great theft,  
But great contentment incurs no loss.

Therefore:  
He who knows when to stop  
Does not continue into danger,  
And may long endure.

#### 45. Quiet

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Great perfection seems imperfect,  
But does not decay;  
Great abundance seems empty,  
But does not fail.

Great truth seems contradictory;  
Great cleverness seems stupid;  
Great eloquence seems awkward.

Though action overcomes contentment,  
Stillness overcomes desire;  
So calm and quiet control the World.

#### 46. Desire

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When the World is not in accord with Tao,  
Horses bear soldiers through the fields;

When the World is in accord with Tao,  
Horses bear horseshit through the fields.

There is no greater curse than desire;  
There is no greater misery than discontent;  
There is no greater ailment than greed;  
But one who is content to be content  
May always be content.

#### 47. Knowledge and Experience

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Without taking a step outdoors  
You know the whole World.  
Without taking a look out the window  
You see the colour of the sky.

The more you experience,  
The less you know.  
The sage wanders without knowing,  
Looks without seeing,  
Accomplishes without acting.

#### 48. Knowledge

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The follower of knowledge acquires as much as he can every day;  
The follower of Tao loses as much as he can every day.

By attrition he reaches a state of inaction  
Wherein he does nothing, but leaves nothing undone.

To conquer the World, do nothing;  
If you must do something,  
The World remains beyond conquest.

#### 49. The Worlds of Others

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The sage does not distinguish between Self and World;  
Therefore the needs of the people of the World are as his own.

He is good to those who are good;  
He is also good to those who are not good;  
For love is goodness.  
He trusts those who are trustworthy;

He also trusts those who are not trustworthy;  
For love is trust.

He is in harmony with the World;  
So he nurtures the Worlds of others  
As a mother does her children.

#### 50. Life and Death

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Death enters life as man enters woman.

The limits of man:  
Thirty years of growth;  
Thirty years of decay;  
Thirty years inbetween;  
So death and life reproduce themselves.

He who would prolong his life  
Will not meet tigers or rhinoceri in the wilds,  
Nor soldiers in battle  
So the rhinoceros finds no place in him for its horn,  
The tiger no place for its claw,  
The soldier no place for a weapon;  
So death finds no place to enter his life.

#### 51. Love

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Tao bears us,  
Love nurtures us,  
Nature shapes us,  
Circumstance completes us.

We worship Tao and honour love;  
For worship of Tao and honour of love  
Are performed by being alive.

Tao bears us,  
Love nurtures, develops, cares for,  
Shelters, comforts, and makes a home for us.

Making without controlling,  
Giving without demanding,  
Guiding without interfering,  
Helping without profiting,

This is love.

## 52. Restraint

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The origins of the World are its mother;  
Know the mother, and you understand the child;  
Know the child, and you embrace the mother,  
Who shall not perish when you die.

Reserve your judgments and words  
And you maintain your influence;  
Draw conclusions and speak your mind  
And your cause is lost.

As seeing detail is clarity,  
So maintaining tact is strength;  
Keep your eyes and mind open  
So that you may not regret your actions;  
This is restraint.

## 53. Distractions

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With but a small understanding  
One may follow Tao like a main road,  
Fearing only to leave it;  
Following a main road is easy,  
But being sidetracked is also easy.

When palaces are kept up  
Fields are left to weeds  
And granaries empty.

Wearing fine clothes,  
Bearing sharp swords,  
Glutting with food and drink,  
Hoarding wealth and possessions -  
These are the ways of theft  
And deviation from Tao.

## 54. Go by Love

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Love does not think of love  
For this reason is it strong;

It does not act,  
Yet leaves nothing undone.

Desire is intent upon love  
For this reason is it weak;  
It always acts,  
Yet gets nothing done.

Nurture love in the Self, and love will be genuine;  
Nurture love in the family, and love will be abundant;  
Nurture love in the community, and love will multiply;  
Nurture love in the culture, and love will flourish;  
Nurture love in the World, and love will be ubiquitous.

Therefore:  
Judge a person by their love;  
Judge a family by its love;  
Judge a community by its love;  
Judge a culture by its love;  
Judge the World by its love.  
How can I know the love of the World?  
By judging my Self.

#### 55. Love and Nature

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Who is filled with love is like a newborn.  
Wasps will not sting him;  
Tigers will not eat him;  
Hawks will not tear out his eyes.

His bones are soft, yet his sinews are supple,  
So his grip is strong;  
He has no wife, yet his manhood is healthy,  
So his vigour is unspoiled;  
He sings all day yet his voice remains sweet  
So his harmony is perfect.

To approach Nature is to know harmony;  
To achieve Nature is to be enlightened;  
But to surpass Nature invites calamity  
For emotion will burst the lungs  
And exhaustion will age the heart;  
The light that burns twice as bright  
Burns half as long.

## 56. Impartiality.

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He who knows does not speak;  
He who speaks does not know.

Reserve your judgments and words;  
Dull your wit and simplify your purpose;  
Be humble as earth and a part of Nature.

In this way  
Friendship and enmity,  
Profit and loss,  
Honour and disgrace,  
Will not affect you.  
The impartial Self is of most benefit to the World.

## 57. Government

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A nation is best governed by innocence;  
A war is best waged by treachery;  
The World is best controlled by inaction;  
Why?

Because:  
The more property and taxes there are,  
The more poverty prevails;  
The more guns and knives there are,  
The more chaos prevails;  
The more arts and sciences there are,  
The more deceit prevails;  
The more rules and regulations there are,  
The more theft prevails.

Therefore the sage says:  
I take no action, and the people become civilized;  
I wage no war, and the people become just;  
I transact no business, and the people become wealthy;  
I have no desire, and the people become innocent.

## 58. Be Forgiving

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When government is lazy and blunt  
The people are kind and honest;

When government is efficient and severe  
The people are discontented and deceitful.

Misery may yield happiness;  
Happiness may conceal misery.  
Who can say which will be for the best?  
Nothing is straightforward.  
Honesty is ever corrupted;  
Kindness is ever seduced;  
Men have been like this for a long time.

So the sage is firm but not cutting,  
Pointed but not piercing,  
Straight but not inflexible,  
Brilliant but not blinding.

#### 59. Restraint

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Manage a great nation  
As you would cook a delicate fish.

When directing men to a purpose  
The sage is restrained;  
Restraint allows time to prepare and strengthen,  
To build loving relationships;  
With sufficient strength and love all resistance is overcome;  
When all resistance is overcome one's purpose is achieved.

Who can achieve his purpose is able to direct men  
And his influence upon them long endures.  
Deeply rooted and firmly established,  
His vision lives on even after death.

#### 60. Emotions

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Because the sage follows Tao his emotions do no harm;  
It is not that they lose their power  
But that they do not hurt others;  
Because they do not hurt others  
He does not hurt others:  
Because his emotions do no harm,  
All his relations with people are loving.

#### 61. International Relations

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A nation acts as a hierarchy, a community, and a woman.  
A woman seduces a man by being cool,  
Being cool is a means of submission.

If a large country submits to a small country  
It will seduce the small country;  
If a small country submits to a large country  
It will seduce the large country;  
The large will submit in order to control  
And the small will submit in order to prosper.

Therefore:  
It is in the interests of a large country to give shelter,  
And in the interests of a small country to give service;  
If both would achieve their purposes,  
Both must submit.

## 62. Sin

-----

Tao is the source of all things,  
The treasure of the saint,  
And the refuge of the sinner.

Fine words win honour  
And fine actions win respect,  
But if a man sins, do not abandon him;  
And if a man gains power, do not bribe him;  
Just be calm and show accordance with Tao.

Why is Tao the treasure of the saint?  
Because it absolves all sin.  
Why is Tao the refuge of the sinner?  
Because it is easily found when sought.  
It is the most valuable gift.

## 63. Confront Difficulty

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Practise no-action;  
Attend to do-nothing;  
Taste the flavorless,  
Examine the small,  
Multiply the few,



Return love for hate.

Deal with difficulty while it is yet easy;  
Deal with the great while it is yet small;

The difficult develops naturally from the easy  
And the great from the small;  
So the sage, by dealing with the small  
Achieves the great.

He who finds it easy to promise finds it hard to deliver;  
He who takes things lightly makes things hard;  
The sage confronts difficulty, and so has none.

#### 64a. Care at the Beginning

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What lies still is easy to grasp;  
What is far off is easy to anticipate;  
What is cold is easy to shatter;  
What is small is easy to disperse.

Yet,  
A tree broader than a man can embrace is born of a tiny shoot;  
A dam taller than a river can overflow is based on a clod of earth;  
A journey of a thousand miles begins at the spot under one's feet.

Therefore deal with things before they happen;  
Create order before there is confusion.

#### 64b. Care at the End

-----

He who acts, spoils;  
He who grasps, loses.  
People often fail on the verge of success;  
Take care at the end as at the beginning,  
So that you may avoid failure.

The sage desires no desire,  
Values no valuable,  
Knows no knowledge,  
But gives people what they can not find  
And helps all things accord with Nature  
Without interfering.

## 65. History

-----

The saints did not want to make people wise,  
But to make them ignorant;  
For it is difficult to lead people who know too much.

To lead a nation by imparting knowledge to its people  
Destroys the nation.  
To lead a nation by decreasing the knowledge of its people  
Strengthens the nation.

Understanding these two paths is understanding history;  
Understanding history gives clarity of vision  
By which one may see through deceit.

## 66. Lead by Following

-----

How does the river carve out the valley?  
By flowing beneath it.  
Thereby the river is master of the valley.

In order to master people  
One must speak as their servant;  
So when the sage is elevated to power  
People do not feel oppressed.

In order to lead people  
One must follow them;  
So when the sage restrains people  
They do not feel hindered.

Thus the popularity of the sage does not fail,  
He does not seem superior, so no one will usurp him.

## 67. Three Treasures

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It may seem that my teaching means nothing;  
It describes the infinite, so of course it means nothing;  
If it meant something it would long since have been refuted.

Yet I have three treasures which I follow and commend to you:  
The first is love,  
By which one finds courage.

The second is restraint,  
By which one finds strength.  
The third is not contending,  
By which one finds influence.

Those who are fearless, but without love,  
Strong, but without restraint,  
Or influential, yet contentious,  
Are doomed.

Only love conquers all and is defeated by none.  
It is Nature's finest tool and sharpest weapon.

#### 68. Using Men

-----

A good soldier does not use violence;  
A good fighter does not use anger;  
A good conqueror does not use attack;  
A good ruler does not use authority;  
Not contending is the best way to use men.

#### 69. Ambush

-----

There is a saying among soldiers:  
It is easier to lose a yard than take an inch.

In this way one may deploy troops without marshalling them,  
Reveal weapons without exposing them,  
Assault the foe without charging them,  
Apply force without aggression.

Conversely there is no disaster like underestimating your enemy;  
For false confidence will lose you your most valued assets.  
When two equally matched forces meet  
The general who conserves life will win.

#### 70. Individuality

-----

My words are easy to understand  
And my actions are easy to perform  
Yet no man can understand or perform them.

My words have logic; my actions have meaning;

Yet these cannot be known and I cannot be known.

We are each unique; no man understands another.  
Though the sage wears coarse clothes, his heart is jade.

#### 71. Sickness

-----

Who knows what he knows is healthy;  
Who ignores what he ignores is sick;  
Who grows sick of sickness recovers;  
The sage is never sick, always sick of sickness.

#### 72. Diplomacy

-----

When people do not fear, they are easily conquered.

Praise their goods and children  
And they will not dislike yours.  
Know your advantage,  
But do not tell it to them;  
Love your home,  
But do not let them know;  
Reject what is yours  
And accept what is theirs.

#### 73. Fate

-----

Who is brave and bold may die;  
Who is brave and subtle may live.  
Which course best serves one's purpose?  
Fate favours some and destroys others.  
The sage does not know why.

Fate does not contend, yet all things are conquered by it;  
It does not ask, yet all things answer to it;  
It does not call, yet all things come to it;  
It does not plan, yet all things are determined by it.

Fate's hands are vast, its fingers spread wide,  
Yet none slip through its grasp.

#### 74. Tyranny

-----

People do not fear death, so do not threaten them with death.

If people feared death, and you executed all who did not love you  
There would be no one left but you and the executioner.  
You would then have to kill him.  
You would then have to cut off your own hands.

#### 75. Extremis

-----

If rulers take too much grain  
People rapidly starve;  
If rulers take too much freedom  
People easily rebel;  
If rulers take too much happiness.  
People gladly die.

By not interfering the sage improves the people's lives.

#### 76. Flexibility

-----

A newborn is soft and tender,  
A crone, hard and stiff.  
Plants and animals, in life, are supple and juicy;  
In death, brittle and dry.  
So softness and tenderness are attributes of life,  
And hardness and stiffness, attributes of death.

Just as a sapless tree will split and decay  
So an inflexible force will meet defeat;  
The hard and mighty lie beneath the ground  
While the tender and weak dance on the breeze above.

#### 77. Balance

-----

Is the movement of Nature not unlike drawing a bow?  
What is higher descends and what is lower ascends;  
What is longer shortens and what is shorter lengthens;  
Nature's way decreases those who have more than they need  
And increases those who need more than they have.

It is not so with Man.  
Man decreases those who need more than they have

And increases those who have more than they need.

The sage works regardless of personal reward or recognition;  
To benefit the World is to benefit the Self.

#### 78. Accept Responsibility

-----

Nothing in the World is as yielding as water;  
Nor can anything better overcome the hardened.

Just as the yielding overcomes the hardened,  
The weak may overcome the strong;  
Yet they do not.

The sage says:  
"Who accepts responsibility for his people rules the country;  
Who accepts responsibility for the World rules the World",  
But his words are not understood.

#### 79. Reconciliation

-----

When conflict is reconciled, some hatred remains;  
How can this be put right?

The sage accepts less than is due  
And does not blame or punish;  
For love seeks agreement  
Where justice seeks payment.

The saints said: "Nature is impartial;  
Therefore it serves those who serve all."

#### 80. Utopia

-----

Imagine that there is a small country with few people;  
Who have a hundred times more than they need;  
Who love life and do not wander far;  
Who own ships but do no foreign trade;  
Who own weapons but do not threaten war;  
Who are literate but keep no histories;  
Who cook well, dress beautifully, dwell safely  
And delight in their own culture,

But live within cock crow of their neighbours.

People in such a place would never leave.

### 81. The Sage

-----

Truth is not rhetorical;  
Therefore rhetoric is not true;  
Lovers do not contend;  
Therefore competitors do not love;  
The enlightened need no knowledge;  
Therefore the learned are not enlightened.

The sage does not aim to increase himself;  
But the more he does for others the more he is satisfied;  
And the more he gives the more he gets.

The best way is to benefit all and harm none;  
So the sage achieves his purpose without contention.

Note:

Interpolation by Peter A. Merel (pete@extro.su.oz.au) based upon the translations of: Lin Yutang, Ch'u Ta-Kao, Gia-Fu Feng & Jane English, Richard Wilhelm and Aleister Crowley.

This interpolation is still very much a work in progress, with Robert Hendricks' and Arthur Waley's translations still to be mixed in before I leave it.

I don't expect much new from Waley, given that Lin Yutang stayed pretty close to him, but Hendricks is obviously a very important translation and will entail real changes to a number of chapters, especially Chapter 65.

Peter A. Merel.  
pete@extro.su.oz.au