

LAU-TSZE'S TAU-TEH-KING.¹

THE OLD PHILOSOPHER'S CLASSIC ON REASON AND VIRTUE TRANSLATED.

I.

I. REASON'S REALISATION.

THE REASON² that can be reasoned is not the eternal Reason.
The name that can be named is not the eternal name. The
nameless is of heaven and earth the beginning. The name-deter-

¹ The present translation is as literal as a clear rendering of the sense will permit. But it is to be feared that to those who know little or nothing of Chinese philosophy in general and Lau-Tsze in particular, a perusal of his book on Reason and Virtue will prove disappointing on account of its paradoxical style and apparent lack of connexion. But they may rest sure that if they will endeavor to comprehend the significance of its underlying ideas, which after all are very simple, their efforts will be richly rewarded, and we must bear in mind, when forming an opinion on Lau-Tsze, that he was born 604 B. C.

Lau-Tsze frequently introduces quotations many of which (e. g., Chapter 22) are apparently old. Some are wise saws or homely proverbs, while others may be Lau-Tsze's own poetry.

While the division of the Tau-Teh-King into two parts was, according to Sse-Ma-Ts'ien, made by Lau-Tsze himself, the division into chapters and their headings have been made by the commentators. The latter are not always appropriate but have been preserved not only from respect of tradition, but also because references to the Tau-Teh-King are commonly made to the traditional chapter divisions. The pronoun "its" which frequently appears in the chapter headings refers to Tau, the Reason.

For an exposition of Lau-Tsze's philosophy see *The Open Court*, Nos. 483-485.

² The word "Reason" has been capitalised wherever it translates the word *tau*, which, reminding us very strongly of the Greek term λόγος, means "word, path, method, and reason."

mined becomes of the ten thousand things¹ the mother. Therefore it is said:

"He who desireless is found
The spiritual of the world will sound.
But he who by desire is bound
Sees the mere shell of things around."

These two things are the same in source but different in name. Their sameness is called a mystery. Indeed, it is the mystery of mysteries. Of all spirituality it is the door.

2. SELF-CULTURE.²

When in the world all understand beauty to be beauty, then only ugliness appears. When all understand goodness to be goodness then only badness appears. For

"To be and not to be are mutually conditioned
The difficult, the easy, are mutually definitioned.
The long, the short, are mutually exhibitioned.
Above, below, are mutually cognitioned.
The sound, the voice are mutually coalitioned.
Before and after are mutually positioned."

Therefore, the holy man abides by non-assertion in his affairs and conveys by silence his instruction. When the ten thousand things arise, verily, he refuses them not. He quickens but owns not. He works but claims not. Merit he accomplishes, but he does not dwell on it.

"Since he does not dwell on it,
It will never leave him."

3. KEEPING THE PEOPLE QUIET.

Not exalting worth keeps people from rivalry. Not prizing what is difficult to obtain keeps people from committing theft. Not contemplating what kindles desire keeps the heart unconfused. Therefore, the holy man when he governs empties the people's

¹ "The ten thousand (viz., all) things" is a name for the world in the sense of nature, or concrete reality.

²A better heading of this chapter would be "The Relative and the Absolute.

hearts but fills their souls.¹ He weakens their ambitions but strengthens their backbones.² Always he keeps the people unsophisticated and without desire. He causes that the crafty do not dare to act. When he acts with non-assertion³ there is nothing ungoverned.

4. SOURCELESS.

Reason is empty but its use is inexhaustible. In its profundity, verily, it resembleth the father of the ten thousand things.

"It blunts its own sharpness,
Unfolds its own tangles,
It dims its own light,
It becomes one with its dust." ⁴

Oh, how calm it seems to remain! I know not whose son it is. Before the Lord, Reason takes precedence.

5. THE FUNCTION OF EMPTINESS.

Heaven and earth exhibit no benevolence; to them the ten thousand things are like straw dogs.⁵ The holy man exhibits no benevolence; to him the hundred families are like straw dogs.

Is not the space between Heaven and earth like unto a bellows? It is empty; yet it collapses not. It moves, and more and more comes forth.

"How soon exhausted is
A gossip's idle talk!
And should we not prefer
On the middle path to walk?" ⁶

¹ Literally "stomachs." *Sin*, "the heart," is conceived as the seat of desire while *fuh*, "the stomach, the interior, or the soul," is the seat of the mind.

² Literally "bones."

³ For *wu wei*, literally "non-action," meaning non-interference with the natural course of things, see *The Open Court*, No. 484. How much Lau-Tsze insists on resolute activity appears from Chapter 30 and other passages in which "*wu wei*, or non-action, i. e., non-assertion" is enjoined as a principle of action by which everything can be accomplished? (Chapters 3, 37, 48).

⁴ This quotation is repeated in Chapter 56.

⁵ Straw dogs are supposed to have been made for sacrificial purposes.

⁶ The empty space between heaven and earth does not collapse, but abundance of words in gossiping leads to exhaustion.

6. THE COMPLETION OF FORM.

"The valley spirit not expires
 Mysterious mother 'tis called by the sires
 The mysterious mother's door, to boot,
 Is called of Heaven and earth the root.
 Forever and aye it seems to endure
 And its use is without effort, sure."¹

7. DIMMING ITS RADIANCE.

Heaven endures and earth is lasting. And why can Heaven and earth endure and be lasting? Because they do not live for themselves. On that account can they endure.

Therefore the holy man puts his person behind and his person comes to the front. He surrenders his person and his person is preserved. Is it not because he seeks not his own? For that reason he can accomplish his own.

8. THE NATURE OF ITS CHANGES.

Superior goodness resembleth water. The water's goodness benefits the ten thousand things, yet it quarreleth not. Because it dwells in places which the multitude of men shun, therefore it is near unto the eternal Reason.

For a dwelling goodness chooses the level. For a heart goodness chooses commotion. When giving, goodness chooses benevolence. In words, goodness chooses faith. In government goodness chooses order. In business goodness chooses ability. In its motion goodness chooses timeliness. It quarreleth not. Therefore, it is not rebuked.

9. PRACTISING PLACIDITY.

Holding and keeping full, had that not better be left alone? Handling and keeping sharp, can that wear long? If gold and jewels fill the hall no one can protect it.

¹ This curious quotation may have reference to the worship of some local deity presiding over a spring that never runs dry. The quaint lines gain a peculiar significance by being referred to the Tau as the mysterious mother of the world.

Rich and high but proud, brings about its own misfortune. To accomplish merit and acquire fame, then to withdraw oneself, that is Heaven's Way (viz., Tau).

10. WHAT CAN BE DONE.

He who sustains and disciplines his soul and embraces unity cannot be deranged. Through attention to his vitality and inducing tenderness he can become like a little child. By purifying, by cleansing and profound intuition he can be free from faults.

In loving the people and administering the country he can practise non-assertion. Opening and closing the gates of Heaven he can be like a mother-bird: bright, and white, and penetrating the four quarters, he can be unsophisticated. He quickens them and feeds them. He quickens but owns not. He acts but claims not. He excels but rules not. This is called profound virtue.

11. THE FUNCTION OF THE NON-EXISTENT.

Thirty spokes unite in one nave and on that which is non-existent¹ depends the carriage's utility. Clay is moulded into a vessel and on that which is non-existent depends the vessel's utility. By cutting out doors and windows we build a house and on that which is non-existent depends the house's utility.

Therefore, the existence of things offers opportunities, but that which is non-existent in them renders them useful.

12. ABSTAINING FROM DESIRE.

"The five colors the human eye will blind,
The five notes the human ear will rend.
The five tastes the human mouth offend
Racing and hunting will human hearts turn mad,
Objects of prize make human conduct bad."

Therefore the holy man attends to the inner and not to the outer. He abandons the latter and chooses the former.

¹ Viz., the hole in the nave, the hollowness of the vessel, the empty space of windows and doors.

13. LOATHING SHAME.

"Favor and disgrace bode awe.

Esteeming the body bodes great trouble."

What is meant by "favor and disgrace bode awe"?

Favor humiliates. Its gain bodes awe; its loss bodes awe.

This is meant by "favor and disgrace bode awe."

What is meant by "Esteeming the body bodes great trouble"?

I have trouble because I have a body. When I have no body, what trouble remains?

Therefore, if one administers the empire as he cares for his body, he can be entrusted with the empire. [If he with love as he cares for his body administers the empire, he can be entrusted with the empire.¹

14. PRAISING THE MYSTERIOUS.

We look at Reason and do not see it; its name is colorless. We listen to Reason and do not hear it; its name is soundless. We grope for Reason and do not grasp it; its name is bodiless.²

These three things cannot further be analysed. Thus they are combined and conceived as a unity whose surface is not clear and whose depth is not obscure.³

Forever and aye Reason remains unnamable, and again and again it reduces things to non-existence. This is called the form of the formless, the image of the imageless. This is called transcendently abstruse.

In front its beginning is not seen. In the rear its end is not seen.

¹ It is probable that this repetition which is contained in all the oldest manuscripts crept into the text through the mistake of an ancient copyist.

² The three words *t* (colorless, placid), *ht* (soundless, rare, thin), and *wti* (minute, fading away, incorporeal) have given rise to much comment, because Abel Rémusat believed to discover in them the name Jehovah. See his *Memoir Sur la vie et les opinions de Lao-Ts'eu*, and compare Stanislaus Julien's Introduction to his translation of the *Tau-Teh-King*, pp. ii-viii.

³ Viz., it is to a superficial enquirer incomprehensible, but to one who enters deeply into it, quite simple.

By holding fast to the Reason of the ancients, the present is mastered and the origin of the past understood. This is called Reason's clue.

15. THE REVEALERS OF VIRTUE.

Those of yore who have succeeded in becoming masters are subtle, spiritual, profound, and penetrating. On account of their profundity they cannot be understood. Because they cannot be understood, therefore I endeavor to make them intelligible.

How they are cautious! Like men in winter crossing a river. How reluctant! Like men fearing in the four quarters their neighbors. How reserved! They behave like guests. How elusive! They resemble ice when melting. How simple! They resemble unseasoned wood. How empty! They resemble the valley. How obscure! They resemble troubled waters.

Who by quieting can gradually render muddy waters clear? Who by stirring can gradually quicken the still?

He who keeps this Reason is not anxious to be filled. Since he is not filled, therefore he can grow old and need not be newly fashioned.

16. RETURNING TO THE ROOT.

He who arrives at vacuity's summit, guards his tranquillity firmly.

All the ten thousand things arise, and I see them return. Now they bloom in bloom, but each one homeward returneth to its root.

Returning to the root means rest. It signifies the return according to destiny. Return according to destiny means the eternal. Knowing the eternal means enlightenment. Not knowing the eternal causes passions to rise; and that is evil.

Knowing the eternal renders comprehensive. Comprehensive means broad. Broad means royal. Royal means heavenly. Heavenly means Reason. Reason means lasting. Thus the decay of the body implies no danger.

17. SIMPLICITY IN HABITS.

Where great sages are (in power), the subjects do not notice their existence. Where there are lesser sages, the people are at-

tached to them ; they praise them. Where still lesser ones are, the people fear them ; and where still lesser ones are, the people despise them. For it is said :

“ If your faith be insufficient, verily, you will receive no faith.”

How reluctantly sages consider their words ! Merit they accomplish ; deeds they perform ; and the hundred families think : “ We are independent ; we are free.”

18. THE PALLIATION OF VULGARITY.

When the great Reason is obliterated, we have benevolence and justice. Prudence and circumspection appear, and we have much hypocrisy. When family relations no longer harmonise, we have filial piety and paternal love. When the country and the clans decay through disorder, we have loyalty and allegiance.

19. RETURNING TO SIMPLICITY.

Abandon your saintliness ; put away your prudence ; and the people will gain a hundred-fold !

Abandon your benevolence ; put away your justice ; and the people will return to filial devotion and paternal love !

Abandon your scheming ; put away your gains ; and thieves and robbers will no longer exist.

These are the three things in comparison to which we deem culture insufficient. Therefore it is said :

“ Hold fast to that which will endure
Show thyself simple, preserve thee pure,
Thy own keep small, thy desires poor.”

20. DIFFERENT FROM THE VULGAR.

Abandon learnedness and you have no vexation. The “ yes ” compared with the “ yea,” how little do they differ ! But the good compared with the bad, how much do they differ !

What the people dread cannot be dreadless. How great is their desolation. Alas ! it has not yet reached its limit.

The multitude of men are happy, so happy, as though celebrating a great feast. They are as though in springtime ascending

a tower. I alone remain quiet, alas ! like one that has not yet received an encouraging omen. I am like unto a babe that does not yet smile.

Forlorn am I, O, so forlorn ! It appears that I have no place whither I may return home.

The multitude of men all have plenty and I alone appear empty. Alas ! I am a man whose heart is foolish.

Ignorant am I, O, so ignorant ! Common people are bright, so bright, I alone am dull.

Common people are smart, so smart, I alone am confused, so confused.

Desolate am I, alas ! like the sea. Adrift, alas ! like one who has no place where to stay.

The multitude of men all possess usefulness. I alone am awkward and a rustic too. I alone differ from others, but I prize seeking sustenance from our mother.

21. EMPTYING THE HEART.

“Vast virtue’s form
Follows Reason’s norm.
And Reason’s nature
Is vague and eluding.
How eluding and vague
All types including.
How vague and eluding !
All beings including.
How deep, and how obscure.
It harbors the spirit pure,
Whose truth is ever sure,
Whose faith abides for aye
From of yore until to-day.
Its name is without cessation.
It watches the world’s formation.”

Whereby do I know that it watches the world’s formation?
By this same Reason !

22. HUMILITY'S INCREASE.

"The deficient will recuperate.
 And the crooked shall be straight.
 The empty find their fill.
 The worn with strength will thrill.
 Who have little shall receive.
 Who have much will have to grieve."

Therefore the holy man embraces unity and becomes for all the world a model. He is not self-displaying, and thus he shines. He is not self-approving, and thus he is distinguished. He is not self-praising, and thus he acquires merit. He is not self-glorifying, and thus he excels. Since he does not quarrel, therefore no one in the world can quarrel with him.

That saying of the ancients: "The deficient will recuperate," is it in any way vainly spoken? Verily, they will recuperate, but they must return home.

23. EMPTINESS AND NON-EXISTENCE.

To be taciturn is the natural way.

A hurricane does not outlast the morning. A cloudburst does not outlast the day. Who causes these events but Heaven and Earth? If even Heaven and Earth cannot be unremitting, will not man be much less so?

Therefore one who pursues his business with Reason, the man of Reason, is identified with Reason. The man who pursues his business with virtue is identified with virtue. The man who pursues his business with loss is identified with loss. When identified with Reason, he forsooth joyfully embraces Reason; when identified with virtue, he forsooth joyfully embraces virtue; and when identified with loss, he forsooth joyfully embraces loss.

"He whose faith is insufficient shall not find faith."

24. TROUBLES IN (THE EAGERNESS TO ACQUIRE) MERIT.

A man on tiptoe cannot stand. A man astride cannot walk. A self-displaying man cannot shine. A self-approving man cannot

be distinguished. A self-praising man cannot acquire merit. A self-glorying man cannot excel. Before the tribunal of Reason he is like offal of food and like an excrescence in the system which all people are likely to detest. Therefore, one who has Reason is without attachment.

25. IMAGING THE MYSTERIOUS.

There is Being that is all-containing, which precedes the existence of Heaven and earth. How calm it is! How incorporeal! Alone it stands and does not change. Everywhere it goes without reaching limits, and can on that account become the world's mother. I know not its name. Its character is defined as Reason. When obliged to give it a name, I call it the Great. The Great I call the Evasive. The Evasive I call the Distant. The Distant I call the Returning.

The saying goes: Reason is great, Heaven is great, Earth is great, and Royalty also is great. There are four things in the world that are great, and Royalty is one of them.

Man's standard is the Earth. The Earth's standard is Heaven. Heaven's standard is Reason. Reason's standard is the intrinsic.

26. THE VIRTUE OF DIGNITY.

The heavy is of the light the root, and rest is motion's master.

Therefore the holy man in his daily walk does not depart from the baggage train.¹ Although he may have magnificent sights, he calmly sits with liberated mind.

But how is it with the master of the ten thousand chariots? In his personal conduct he makes light of the empire. He makes light of it and will lose his vassals. He is passionate and will lose the throne.

27. THE FUNCTION OF SKILL.

“Good travellers leave not trace nor track,
Good speakers, in logic show no lack,
Good counters need no counting rack.

¹ “Not to depart from the baggage waggons” has become proverbial in Chinese and means “to preserve one's dignity.”

Good lockers bolting bars need not,
 Yet none their locks can loose.
 Good binders need not string nor knot,
 Yet none unties their noose."

Therefore the holy man is always a good saviour of men, for there are no outcast people. He is always a good saviour of things, for there are no outcast things. This is called concealed enlightenment.

Therefore the good man is the bad man's instructor, while the bad man is the good man's capital. He who does not esteem his instructor, and he who does not love his capital, although he may be prudent, is greatly mistaken. This I call significant spirituality.

28. RETURNING TO SIMPLICITY.

"Who his manhood shows
 And his womanhood knows¹
 Becomes the empire's river.
 Is he the empire's river,
 He will from virtue never deviate,
 And home he turneth to a child's estate.

"Who his brightness shows
 And his blackness knows
 Becomes the empire's model.
 Is he the empire's model,
 Of virtue never he'll be destitute,
 And home he turneth to the absolute.

"Who knows his fame
 And guards his shame
 Becomes the empire's valley.
 Is he the empire's valley,
 For e'er his virtue will sufficient be,
 And home he turneth to simplicity."

¹ Manhood represents strength, and womanhood weakness.

By scattering about his simplicity he makes (of the people) vessels of usefulness. The holy man employs them as officers; for a great administration does no harm.

29. NON-ASSERTION.

When one desires to take in hand the empire and make it, I see him not succeed. The empire is a divine vessel which cannot be made. One who makes it, mars it. One who takes it, loses it. And it is said of beings:

“Some are obsequious, others move boldly,
Some breathe warmly, others coldly,
Some are strong and others weak,
Some rise proudly, others sneak.”

Therefore the holy man abandons pleasure, he abandons extravagance, he abandons indulgence.

30. BEWARE OF WAR.

He who with Reason assists the master of mankind will not with arms conquer the empire. His methods (are such as) invite requital.

Where armies are quartered briars and thorns grow. Great wars unfailingly are followed by famines. A good man acts resolutely and then stops. He ventures not to take by force. He is resolute but not boastful; resolute but not arrogant; resolute because he cannot avoid it; resolute but not violent.

Things thrive and then grow old. This is called un-Reason. Un-Reason soon ceases.

31. QUELLING WAR.

Even beautiful arms are unblest among tools, and people had better shun them. Therefore he who has Reason does not employ them.

The superior man when residing at home honors the left. When using arms, he honors the right. Arms are unblest among tools and not the superior man's tools. Only when it is unavoidable he uses them. Peace and quietude he holds high. He con-

quers but rejoices not. Rejoicing at a conquest means to enjoy the slaughter of men. He who enjoys the slaughter of men will most assuredly not obtain his will in the empire.

[In propitious events the left is exalted. In evil events the right is exalted. The assistant army-leader sits to the left. The superior army-leader sits to the right. This indicates that the position of superior power is here as in the arrangement of funeral ceremonies. The slaughter of many multitudes of men must be deplored with sorrow and lamentation, and the conqueror in a battle must be placed according to the funeral ceremonial.]¹

32. THE VIRTUE OF HOLINESS.

Reason is always ineffable. Although its simplicity seems insignificant, the whole world does not dare to suppress it. If princes and kings could keep it, the ten thousand things would of themselves pay homage. Heaven and Earth would unite in dropping sweet dew, and the people with no one to command them would of themselves be righteous.

With the beginning of cosmic order Reason became name-determined. Whenever the name-determined in its turn acquires existence, one learns to know when to stop. By knowing when to stop, one avoids danger.

To illustrate Reason's relation to the world we compare it to streamlets and creeks in their course towards great rivers and the ocean.

33. THE VIRTUE OF DISCRIMINATION.

One who knows others is clever, but one who knows himself is enlightened.

One who conquers others is powerful, but one who conquers himself is mighty.

One who knows sufficiency is rich.

One who pushes with vigor has will, one who loses not his place endures. One who may die but will not perish, is endowed with life for ever.

¹ This passage is supposed to be written by Wang Pi as a comment and has crept into the text by mistake.

34. TRUST IN ITS PERFECTION.

How all-pervading is the great Reason ! It can be on the left and it can be on the right. The ten thousand things depend upon it for their life, and it refuses them not. When its merit is accomplished it assumes not the name. Lovingly it nourishes the ten thousand things and plays not the lord. Ever desireless it can be classed with the small. The ten thousand things return home to it. It plays not the lord. It can be classed with the great.

Therefore, the holy man unto death does not make himself great and can thus accomplish his greatness.

35. THE VIRTUE OF BENEVOLENCE.

“Who holdeth fast to the great Form,
Of him the world will come in quest :
For there they never meet with harm,
But find contentment, comfort, rest.”

Music with dainties makes the passing stranger stop.¹

When Reason comes from the mouth, how tasteless it is ! It has no flavor. When looked at, there is not enough to be seen ; when listened to, there is not enough to be heard, but its use is inexhaustible.

36. SECRET ENLIGHTENMENT.

That which is about to contract has surely been first expanded. That which is about to weaken has surely been first strengthened. That which is about to fall has surely been first raised. That which is about to be despoiled has surely originally been endowed.

This is called secret enlightenment.

The tender and the weak conquer the hard and the strong.

As the fish should not escape from the deep, so the country's sharp tools should not be shown to the people.

¹ The connexion of this sentence with the following paragraph is the thought that music and dainties are to the taste of the people, but Reason is useful.

37. ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNMENT.

Reason always practises non-assertion, and there is nothing that remains undone.

If princes and kings could keep Reason, the ten thousand things would of themselves be reformed. While being reformed they would yet be anxious to stir; but I would restrain them by the simplicity of the nameless.

“The simplicity of the unexpressed
Will purify the heart of lust.
Where there's no lust there will be rest,
And all the world will thus be blest.”

II.

38. DISCOURSING ON VIRTUE.

Superior virtue in un-virtue. Therefore, it has virtue. Inferior virtue never loses sight of virtue. Therefore it has no virtue. Superior virtue is non-assertion and without pretension. Inferior virtue asserts virtue and makes pretensions.

Superior benevolence acts but makes no pretensions.

Superior justice acts and makes pretensions. The superior propriety acts and when no one responds to it, it stretches its arm and enforces its rules. Thus it loses Reason and then virtue appears. It loses virtue and then benevolence appears. It loses benevolence and then justice appears. It loses justice and then propriety appears. The rules of propriety are the semblance of loyalty and faith, and the beginning of disorder.

Quick-wittedness is the (mere) flower of Reason, but of ignorance the beginning.

Therefore a great man abides by the solid and dwells not in the external. He abides in the fruit and dwells not in the flower. Therefore he discards the latter and chooses the former.

39. THE ROOT OF ORDER.

From of old these things have obtained oneness:

“Heaven through oneness has become pure.

Earth through oneness can endure.

Minds through oneness their souls procure.
Valleys through oneness repletion secure.

“All creatures through oneness to life have been called.
And kings were through oneness as models installed.”
Such is the result of oneness.

“ Were Heaven not pure it might be rent.
Were earth not stable it might be bent.
Were minds not ensouled they'd be impotent.
Were valleys not filled they'd soon be spent.
When creatures are lifeless who can their death prevent?
Are kings not models, but on highness bent,
Their fall, forsooth, is imminent.”

Thus, the noble come from the commoners as their root, and the high rest upon the lowly as their foundation. Therefore, princes and kings call themselves orphans, widowers, and unworthies. Is this not because they take lowliness as their root?

The several parts of a carriage are not a carriage.¹

Those who have become a unity are neither anxious to be praised with praise like a gem, nor disdained with disdain like a stone.

40. AVOIDING ACTIVITY.

“Homeward is Reason's course,
Weakness is Reason's force.”

Heaven and earth and the ten thousand things come from existence, but existence comes from non-existence.

41. SAMENESS IN DIFFERENCE.

When a superior scholar hears of Reason he endeavors to practise it. When an average scholar hears of Reason he will sometimes keep it and sometimes lose it. When an inferior scholar hears of reason he will greatly ridicule it. Were it not thus ridiculed, it would as Reason be insufficient. Therefore the poet says:

¹ The simile of the unity of a chariot as being, like the unity of a soul, not any one of its parts, is used also in the *The Milinda Pañha*, one of the most important books of the Buddhist canon.

“The reason-enlightened seem dark and black,
 The reason-advanced seem going back,
 The reason-straight-levelled seem rugged and slack.

“The high in virtue resemble a vale,
 The purely white in shame must quail,
 The broadest virtue seems to fail.

“The solidest virtue seems not alert,
 The simplest truth appears pervert,
 The greatest square will rightness desert.

“The largest vessel is not yet complete,
 The loudest sound is not speech replete,
 The greatest form has no shape concrete.”

Reason is hidden and has no name. Yet Reason alone is good for imparting and completing.

42. REASON'S MODIFICATIONS.

Reason begets unity; unity begets duality; duality begets trinity; and trinity begets the ten thousand things.

The ten thousand things bear the negative principle and embrace the positive principle, while the immaterial breath renders them harmonious.

That which the people find odious, to be an orphan, a widower, or to be unworthy, kings and princes select as their titles. Thus seeming loss is but gain. Seeming gain is but loss.

What others have taught I teach also. The strong and aggressive do not die a natural death; but I shall expound the doctrine's foundation.

43. ITS UNIVERSAL APPLICATION.

The world's weakest overcomes the world's hardest. Non-existence enters into the impenetrable. Thereby I comprehend of non-assertion the advantage, and of silence the lesson. There are few in the world who obtain the advantage of non-assertion.

44. SETTING UP PRECEPTS.

"Name or person, which is more near?
 Person or fortune, which is more dear?
 Gain or loss, which is more sear?

 "Extreme dotage leadeth to squandering,
 Hoarded wealth inviteth plundering.

 "Who is content incurs no humiliation,
 Who knows when to stop risks no vitiation,
 Forever lasteth his duration."

45. GREATEST VIRTUE.

"The greatest perfection seems imperfect,
 But its work undecaying remaineth.
 The greatest fulness is emptiness-checked,
 But its work 's not exhausted nor waneth."

Thus, the greatest straightness resembleth crookedness. The greatest mastery resembleth apprenticeship. The greatest eloquence resembleth stammering.

Motion conquers cold. Quietude conquers heat. Clearness and purity are the world's standard.

46. MODERATION OF DESIRE.

When the world possesses Reason, race horses are reserved for hauling dung. When the world is without Reason, war horses are bred in the common.

No greater sin than yielding to desire. No greater misery than discontent. No greater calamity than acquisitiveness.

Therefore, he who knows the contentment of content is always content.

47. VIEWING THE DISTANT.

"Without passing out of the gate
 The world's course I prognosticate.
 Without peeping through the window,

The heavenly Reason I contemplate.
 The further one goes,
 The less one knows."

Therefore, the sage does not travel, and yet he has knowledge. He does not see the things, and yet he defines them. He does not labor, and yet he completes.

48. FORGETTING KNOWLEDGE.

He who seeks learnedness will daily increase. He who seeks Reason will daily diminish. He will diminish and continue to diminish until he arrives at non-assertion. With non-assertion there is nothing that he cannot achieve. When he takes the empire, it is always because he uses no diplomacy. He who uses diplomacy, is not fit to take the empire.

49. TRUST IN VIRTUE.

The sage never possesses his heart. The hundred families' hearts he makes his heart.

The good I meet with goodness; the bad I also meet with goodness; for virtue is good. The faithful I meet with faith; the faithless I also meet with faith; for virtue is faithful.

The sage dwells in the world anxious, very anxious in his dealings with the world. He universalises his heart and the hundred families fix upon him their ears and eyes. The sage is as a child among them all.

50. THE ESTIMATION OF LIFE.

Going forth is life; coming home is death.

Three in ten are pursuers of life; three in ten are pursuers of death; three in ten of the men that live pass into the realm of death.¹

Now, what is the reason? It is because they live life's intensity.

¹ We interpret this passage to mean that nine in ten spoil their lives; three because bent on life for life's sake, three ruining themselves, and three actually dying. There is only one in ten who esteems life in the right way.

Why! I understand that one who takes good care of his life, when travelling on land will not fall in with the rhinoceros or the tiger. When entering an army he need not fear armed soldiers. The rhinoceros finds no place where to insert its horn. The tiger finds no place where to lay his claws. The soldier finds no place where to thrust his blade. The reason is that he does not belong to the realm of death.

51. NURSING VIRTUE.

Reason quickens all creatures. Virtue feeds them. Reality shapes them. The forces complete them. Therefore among the ten thousand things there is none that does not esteem Reason and honor virtue.

Since the esteem of Reason and the honoring of virtue is by no one commanded, it is forever spontaneous. Therefore it is said that Reason quickens all creatures, while virtue feeds them, raises them, nurtures them, completes them, matures them, rears them, and protects them.

To quicken but not to own, to make but not to claim, to raise but not to rule, this is called profound virtue.

52. RETURNING TO THE ORIGIN.

When the world takes its beginning, Reason becomes the world's mother.

When he who knows his mother, knows in turn that he is her child, and when he who is quickened as a child, in turn keeps to his mother, to the end of life, his person is not in danger. When he closes his mouth, and shuts his sense-gates, in the end of life, his person affords no trouble; but when he opens his mouth and meddles with affairs, in the end of life his person cannot be saved.

Who beholds his smallness is called enlightened. Who preserves his tenderness is called strong. Who uses Reason's light and returns home to its enlightenment does not surrender his person to perdition. This is called practising the eternal.

53. GAINING INSIGHT.

If I have too little knowledge of walking in the great Reason, I have merely to be afraid of self-assertion.

The great Reason is very plain, but people are fond of by-paths.

When a palace is very splendid, the fields are very weedy and granaries very empty.

To wear ornaments and gay clothes, to carry sharp swords, to be excessive in drinking and eating, to have a redundance of costly articles, this is the pride of robbers. Surely this is un-Reason !

54. THE CULTIVATION OF INTUITION.

“What is well planted is not uprooted ;
What's well preserved cannot be looted !”

By sons and grandsons the sacrificial celebrations shall not cease.

Who cultivates Reason in his person, his virtue is genuine. Who cultivates it in his house, his virtue is overflowing. Who cultivates it in his township, his virtue is lasting. Who cultivates it in his country, his virtue flourishes. Who cultivates it in the world, his virtue is universal.

Therefore, by one's person one tests persons. By one's house one tests houses. By one's township one tests townships. By one's country one tests countries. By one's world one tests worlds.

How do I know that the world is such? Through Reason.

55. THE WARRANT OF THE MYSTERIOUS.

He who possesses virtue in all its solidity is like unto a little child. Venomous reptiles do not sting him, fierce beasts do not seize him. Birds of prey do not strike him. His bones are weak, his sinews tender, but his grasp is firm. He does not yet know the relation between male and female, but his virility is strong. Thus his metal grows to perfection. A whole day he might cry and sob without growing hoarse. This shows the perfection of his harmony.

To know the harmonious is called the eternal. To know the eternal is called enlightenment.

To increase life is called a blessing, and heart-directed vitality is called strength, but things vigorous are about to grow old and I call this un-Reason.

Un-Reason soon ceases !

56. THE VIRTUE OF THE MYSTERIOUS.

One who knows does not talk. One who talks does not know.
He keeps his mouth shut and his sense-gates closed.

“He blunts his own sharpness.

Unfolds his own tangles.

He dims his own light.

He identifies himself with his own dust.”¹

This is called profound identification.

Thus he is inaccessible to friendship and also inaccessible to enmity. He is inaccessible to profit and inaccessible to loss. He is also inaccessible to favor and inaccessible to disgrace. Thus he becomes world-honored.

57. SIMPLICITY IN HABITS.

With rectitude one governs the state ; with craftiness one leads the army ; with non-diplomacy one takes the empire. How do I know that it is so? Through Reason.

The more restrictions and prohibitions are in the empire, the poorer grow the people. The more weapons the people have, the more troubled are the homes of the country. The more there is cunning and skill, the more startling events will happen. The more mandates and laws are enacted, the more there will be thieves and robbers.

Therefore the holy man says : I practise non-assertion, and the people of themselves reform. I love quietude, and the people of themselves become righteous. I use no diplomacy, and the people of themselves become rich. I have no desire, and the people of themselves remain simple.

58. ADAPTATION TO CHANGE.

Whose government is unostentatious, quite unostentatious, his people will be prosperous, quite prosperous. Whose government is prying, quite prying, his people will be needy, quite needy.

¹ The same quotation as in Chapter 4.

Misery, alas! rests upon happiness. Happiness, alas! underlies misery. But who foresees the catastrophe? It will not be prevented!

When the righteous turn rascals and the good turn evil-doers, it bodes the degeneration of mankind. Its day is already lasting.

Therefore the sage is square but not sharp, strict but not obnoxious, upright but not restraining, bright but not dazzling.

59. HOLD FAST TO REASON.

In governing men and in attending to Heaven, there is nothing like moderation. Now since of moderation it is said that it must be early acquired, if early acquired, it is richly accumulated virtue. If one has richly accumulated virtue, then nothing is unconquerable. If there is nothing unconquerable, then no one knows his limits. If no one knows his limits, one can possess the country. If one possesses the mother of the country (moderation), one can thereby last long. This is called having deep roots and firm fibres; of long life and lasting comprehension this is the way.

60. HOW TO KEEP ONE'S PLACE.

Govern a great country as you would fry small fish.¹

If with Reason the empire is managed, its ghosts will not spook. Not only will its ghosts not spook, but its gods will not harm men. Not only will its gods not harm men, but its sages will also not harm men. Since neither will do harm, therefore their virtues will be combined.

61. THE VIRTUE OF HUMILITY.

A great state, one that lowly flows, becomes the empire's union, and the empire's wife. The wife always through quietude conquers her husband. As quietude is stooping, thus a great state through stooping to small states takes the small states, and small states, by stooping to great states, will take great states.

¹ Viz., neither gut nor scale them.

Therefore, some stoop to conquer; others stoop in consequence of conquering.

A great state desires no more than to unite and feed the people; a small state desires no more than to devote itself to the service of the people; but that both may obtain their wishes, the greater one must stoop.

62. PRACTISE REASON.

It is Reason that is the ten thousand things' asylum, the good man's wealth, the bad man's stay.

With beautiful words one can sell. With honest conduct one can do still more.

If a man be bad, why should he be thrown away? Therefore, an emperor was elected and three ministers appointed; but better than holding before one's face the jade table (of the ministry) and riding with four horses, is sitting still and propounding the eternal Reason.

Why do the ancients prize this Reason? Is it not, say, because when sought it is obtained and the sinner thereby can be saved? Therefore it is the world's glory.

63. CONSIDER BEGINNINGS.

Assert non-assertion. Practise non-practice. Taste non-taste. Make great the small. Make much the little.

Respond to hostility with virtue.

Contemplate a difficulty when it is easy. Manage a great thing when it is small.

The world's most difficult undertakings necessarily originate while easy, and the world's greatest undertakings necessarily originate while small.

Therefore the sage to the end does not venture to play the great, and thus he can accomplish his greatness. As one who lightly promises rarely keeps his word, so he to whom many things are easy will necessarily encounter many difficulties. Therefore, the holy man regards everything as difficult, and thus to the end encounters no difficulties.

64. MIND THE INSIGNIFICANT.

What is still at rest is easily kept quiet. What has not as yet appeared is easily prevented. What is still feeble is easily broken. What is still scant is easily dispersed.

Treat things before they exist. Regulate things before disorder begins. The spreading tree originates from a tiny fibre. A tower of nine stories rises from a small mound of earth. A thousand miles' journey begins with a foot.

He that makes mars. He that grasps loses.

The holy man does not make ; therefore he mars not. He does not grasp ; therefore he loses not. The people when undertaking an enterprise are always near completion, and yet they fail. Remain careful to the end as in the beginning and you will not fail in your enterprise.

Therefore the holy man desires to be desireless, and does not prize articles difficult to obtain. He learns, not to be learned, and tries again what the multitudes of the people give up. He assists the ten thousand things in their natural development, but he does not dare to interfere.

65. THE VIRTUE OF SIMPLICITY.

The ancients who were well versed in Reason did not thereby enlighten the people ; they intended thereby to make them simple-hearted.

If people are difficult to govern, it is because they are too smart. To govern the country with smartness is the country's curse. To govern the country without smartness is the country's blessing. He who knows these two things is also a model, like the ancients. Always to know them is called profound virtue.

Profound virtue is deep, forsooth. It is far-reaching, forsooth. It is to everything reverse, forsooth. But then it will procure great obedience.

66. PUTTING ONESELF BEHIND.

That rivers and oceans can of the hundred valleys be kings is due to their excelling in lowliness. Thus they can of the hundred valleys be the kings.

Therefore the sage, when anxious to be above the people, must in his words keep underneath them. When anxious to lead the people, he must with his person keep behind them.

Therefore, the sage dwells above, but the people feel not the burden. He is ahead, but the people suffer no harm. Therefore the world rejoices in exalting him without tiring. Because he strives not, no one in the world will strive with him.

67. THE THREE TREASURES.

All in the world call my Reason greatly abnormal, but it resembles the abnormal only because it is great. Did it resemble the normal, how lasting, indeed, would its mediocrity be!

I have three treasures which I preserve and treasure. The first is called compassion. The second is called economy. The third is called not daring to come in the world to the front. The compassionate can be brave; the economical can be generous; those who dare not come to the front in the world can become complete as chief vessels.

Now, if people discard compassion and are brave; if they discard economy and are generous; if they discard modesty and are ambitious, they will surely die!

Now, the compassionate will in the attack be victorious, and in the defence be firm. Heaven when about to save one will with compassion protect him.

68. COMPLYING WITH HEAVEN.

He who excels as a commander is not warlike. He who excels as a fighter is not wrathful. He who excels in conquering the enemy does not strive. He who excels in employing men is lowly.

This is called the virtue of those who do not strive. This is called utilising men's ability. This is called complying with Heaven—since olden times the highest.

69. THE FUNCTION OF THE MYSTERIOUS.

A military expert has said: "I dare not act as host but act as guest.¹ I dare not advance an inch, but I withdraw a foot."

¹ Viz., "I am reserved." I allow the enemy to open hostilities. But when hos-

This is called marching without marching, threatening without arms, charging without hostility, seizing without an army.

No greater misfortune than making light of the enemy! When we make light of the enemy, it is almost as though we had lost our treasure—(compassion).

Thus, if matched armies encounter one another, the tenderer one is sure to conquer.

70. DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.

My words are very easy to understand and very easy to practise, but in the world no one can understand, no one can practise them.

Words have an ancestor ; Deeds have a master—(Reason). Since he is not understood, therefore I am not understood. Those who understand me are few, and thus I am distinguished.

Therefore the holy man wears wool, and hides in his bosom his jewels.

71. THE DISEASE OF KNOWLEDGE.

To know the unknowable that is elevating. Not to know the knowable that is sickness.

Only by becoming sick of sickness we can be without sickness.

The holy man is not sick, because he is sick of sickness. Therefore he is not sick.

72. HOLDING ONESELF DEAR.

If the people do not fear the dreadful, the great dreadful will come, surely.

Do not render their lives narrow. Do not make their lot wearisome. When it is not made wearisome, then it will not be wearisome.

Therefore, the sage knows himself but does not display himself. He holds himself dear but does not honor himself. Thus he discards the latter and chooses the former.

tilities can no longer be avoided Lau-Tsze proposes to strike resolutely and to end hem. Compare Chapter 30.

73. DARING TO ACT.

Courage, if carried to daring, leads to killing ; courage, if not carried to daring, leads to letting live. Either of these two things is sometimes beneficial, sometimes harmful.

“Why 't is by Heaven rejected,
Who has the reason detected?”

Therefore the holy man also regards it as difficult.

The Heavenly Reason strives not, but it is sure to conquer. It speaks not, but it is sure to respond. It summons not, but it comes of itself. It works patiently but is sure in its designs.

Heaven's net is vast, so vast. It is wide-meshed, but it loses nothing.

74. OVERCOME DELUSION.

If the people do not fear death, how can they be frightened by death?

If we make people fear death, and supposing some would (still) dare to rebel, if we seize them for capital punishment, who will dare?

There is always an executioner who kills. Now to take the place of the executioner who kills is taking the place of the great carpenter who hews. If a man takes the place of the great carpenter who hews it will be an exception, indeed, if he does not injure his hand.

¶ 75. HARMED THROUGH GREED.

The people hunger because their superiors consume too many taxes ; therefore they hunger. The people are difficult to govern because their superiors are too meddlesome ; therefore it is difficult to govern. The people make light of death on account of the intensity of their clinging to life ; therefore they make light of death.

He who is not bent on life is superior to him who esteems life.

76. BEWARE OF STRENGTH.

Man during life is tender and delicate. When he dies he is stiff and stark.

The ten thousand things, the grass as well as the trees, are while they live tender and subtle. When they die they are rigid and dry. Thus the hard and the strong are the companions of death. The tender and the delicate are the companions of life.

Therefore, he who in arms is strong will not conquer. When a tree has grown strong it is doomed.

The strong and the great stay below. The tender and the delicate stay above.

77. HEAVEN'S REASON.

Heaven's Reason verily is like stretching a bow. It brings down the high, it lifts up the lowly. It diminishes those who have abundance ; it gives to those who are deficient.

Such is Heaven's Reason. It diminishes those who have abundance but makes complete the deficient.

Man's Reason is not so. He diminishes the deficient in order to serve those who have abundance. Where is he who would have abundance for serving the world? It is the man of Reason.

Therefore the holy man acts but does not claim ; merit he accomplishes but is not attached, and indeed he is not anxious to display his excellence.

78. TRUST IN FAITH.

In the world nothing is tenderer and more delicate than water. In attacking the hard and the strong nothing will surpass it. There is nothing that herein takes its place. The weak conquer the strong, the tender conquer the rigid. In the world there is no one who does not know it, but no one will practise it. Therefore the holy man says :

“Him who the country's sin makes his,
We hail as priest at the great sacrifice.
Him who the curse bears of the country's failing
As king of the empire we are hailing.”

True words seem paradoxical.

79. KEEP YOUR OBLIGATIONS.

When a great hatred is reconciled, naturally some hatred will remain. How can this be made good?

Therefore the sage keeps the obligations of his contract and exacts not from others. Those who have virtue attend to their obligations; those who have no virtue attend to their claims.

Heaven's Reason shows no preference but always assists the good man.

80. REMAINING IN ISOLATION.

In a small country with few people let there be aldermen and mayors who are possessed of power over men but would not use it. Induce people to grieve at death but do not cause them to move to a distance. Although they had ships and carriages they should find no occasion to ride in them. Although they had armors and weapons they should find no occasion to don them.

Induce people to return to knotted cords¹ and to use them, to delight in their food, to be proud of their clothes, to be content with their homes, and to rejoice in their customs: then in a neighboring state within sight, the voices of the cocks and dogs would be within hearing, yet the people might grow old and die before they visited one another.

81. PROPOUNDING THE ESSENTIAL.

True words are not pleasant; pleasant words are not true; good ones are not contentious; contentious ones are not good; instructive ones are not stilted; stilted ones are not instructive.

The holy man hoards not. The more he does for others, the more he owns himself. Therefore by giving to others, he acquires more for himself.

Heaven's Reason is to benefit but not to injure; the holy man's Reason is to act but not to strive.

EDITOR.

¹ The most ancient method of writing.