COMMENTARY ON THE LAO TZU

by

Wang Pi

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CHAPTER 1

The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao;
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.

The Tao that can be told of and the name that can be named point to a particular affair and construct a form but not their eternal aspect. Therefore they cannot be told of or named.

The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
The Named is the mother of all things.[1]

All being originated from nonbeing. The time before physical forms and names appeared was the beginning of the myriad things. After forms and names appear, "Tao (the Way) develops them, nourishes them, provides their formal shape and completes their formal substance,"[2] that is, becomes (or is) their Mother. This means that Tao produces and completes things with the formless and nameless. Thus they are produced and completed[3] but do not know why.

Indeed it is the mystery of mysteries.[4]
Therefore let there always be no desire,[5] so we may see their subtlety.[6]

Subtlety is the ultimate of minuteness. The myriad things originate in subtlety and afterward complete themselves. They originate in nonbeing and afterward are born. Therefore if we are always without

desire and empty,[7] we may see the subtlety of these beginnings.

And let us always have desires, so we may see the outcome.

Outcome means to come to an end. In general, if being is to be useful, it has to function through nonbeing.[8] Where a desire has roots, these must be[9] in accord with Tao before they come into realization. Thus if we always have desire, we can observe the outcome of things to the very end.

The two are the same,
But after they are produced, they have different names.
They both may be called mystery.[10]
Mystery and more mystery.
The door of all subtleties![11]

"Both" means beginning and Mother. "The same" and "produced" mean that together they are produced from mystery. Having different names, what applies to them cannot be the same. At the start we call them beginning and at the end we call them Mother. Mystery is effacement, the silent, and nonbeing, from which originate beginning and Mother. Since we cannot name them, we cannot say they both may be called mystery. But here they are called mystery because there is no way out but to call them so. If we call them so, then

we cannot say for sure that there is only one thing that is mysterious. That being the case[12] names fall far short of the truth. Hence it is said, "Mystery and more mystery"! All subtleties are produced from the same source and therefore it is said, "The door of all subtleties."

NOTES

1. Chan's note (The Way of Lao Tzu, p. 98, note 2): It is possible to punctuate wu-ming[a] (nameless) and yu-ming[b] (named) to mean "nonbeing is the name of" and "being is the name of", respectively. This is the reading by Duyvendak. Duyvendak refers to Ma Hsü-lun as authority; indeed, he depends chiefly on Ma. Ma did punctuate in this way in 1924 but in the revised edition of his book (1956), he has discarded the punctuation and has reverted to the generally accepted way as we have it. Wu-ming and yu-ming are key terms in the Lao Tzu, and are found also in chapters 32, 37, and 41.

2. Quoting Lao Tzu, ch. 51. According to Hatano Tarō, Lao Tzu Wang Chu Chiao Cheng (Wang Pi's commentary on the Lao Tzu corrected) (hereafter referred to as Hatano), I, p. 38, several Japanese commentators, referring to the Ch'u-hsüeh chi[c] (Records of initial learning), quoted Wang Pi's commentary on chapter 51 as saying "T'ing wei p'in ch'i hsing, tu wei ch'eng ch'i chih[d]." However, this is not found in the present Wang Pi commentary.

Arthur Waley, The Way and Its Power, p. 205, translates tu chih[e] in chapter 51 as "brewed for them," and says in the footnote the word tu means decoction, whether nutritive, medical, or (as always in modern Chinese) poisonous. The implication of decoction may be right, as Tao in the end inevitably decocts every being to its formal or its original substance.

3. I-shih i-ch'eng[f] (produces and completes) also appears in chapter 21 of Wang Pi's commentary. As Lao Ssu-kuang has pointed out in his Chung-kuo che-hsüeh shih (History of Chinese philosophy) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1931), p. 171, Fung Yu-lan (Chung-kuo che-hsüeh shih, p. 608, not translated by Derk Bodde in the History of Chinese Philosophy) mispunctuated the sentence to read, "Things are produced. Completed but do not...."

4. This paragraph has been adapted from Chan's translation in his A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, p. 321. All quotations from the Source Book are reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

5. Chan's rendering: "Therefore let there always be non-being so we may see their subtlety. And let there always be being so we may see their outcome." He has provided a long footnote (p. 99, note 5) to explain his translation. The rendering here is necessary to conform to Wang Pi's understanding.

6. Chan's own note: (p. 99, note 4): This translation of miao[g] as "subtlety" rather than "mystery" is according to Wang Pi.

7. Hatano (I, p. 40) suggests that the words k'ung-hsü[h] (empty) are later additions. Hatano says two texts have added ch'i-huai[i] (its heart) under k'ung-hsü in order to make better sense, but he thinks k'ung-hsü is superfluous.

8. Wang Pi's expression i wu wei yung[j] (use nonbeing as function) also appears in Wang Pi chapters 11 and 40.

9. Shih[k] (to go to) is here understood as ho[l] (to accord).

10. Chan's original translation, "deep and profound." He noted (p. 100, note 8): The word hsüan[m] (deep and profound) has a very wide range of meanings; it means "dark," "abstruse," "deep," "profound," "secret," and so forth. In Taoist religion the aspect of mystery should be stressed, but in Taoist philosophy the profound or metaphysical aspect is paramount. The word simply has to be understood in its context.

11. Chan's own note (p. 100, note 9): Professor Boodberg has written an extremely provocative article on the translation of this chapter ("Philosophical Notes on Chapter One of Lao Tzu," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 20 [1957]: 598-618). He says that

"philologist should protest with the utmost vigor the common translation of Chinese yu and wu as 'Being' and 'Non-being' respectively....these two Chinese terms, even in Taoist environment, remained securely within the semantic and philosophical category of habit of possession, being both essentially transitive verbs, 'to have (something)' and 'not to have (something,' with objects following them in the normal course of grammatical and philosophical events" (p. 607). Evidently he overlooks the fact that in the Lao Tzu (chapters 2, 40, and so on), and in many places in the Chuang Tzu[n] (by Chuang Chou[o], 369-268 B.C.?), (especially chapters 2, 6, 12, 1:33b-34a, 3:15a, 5:9a...., Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an[p] (Four Libraries series) ed., to mention only a few instances, yu[q] and wu[r] are not transitive verbs and do not mean "having" or "not having" anything.

12. The meaning of the corrupted text here is unclear.

CHAPTER 2

When the people of the world all know beauty as
beauty,
There arises the recognition of ugliness.
When they all know the good as good,
There arises the recognition of evil.
Therefore: Being and nonbeing produce each other;
Difficult and easy complete each other;
Long and short contrast[1] each other;
High and low distinguish each other;
Sound and voice harmonize each other;
Front and behind accompany each other.

The beautiful is what the human heart
increasingly enjoys,[2] and ugliness is what
the human heart hates and dislikes. Beauty
and ugliness are comparable to joy and anger.
Good and evil are comparable to right and
wrong. Joy and anger have a common root.
Right and wrong belong to the same family.[3]
Therefore they should not be presented
onesidedly. All these six are names and
articles[4] that show Nature (Tzu-jan[a], self-so)
should not be presented onesidedly.

Therefore the sage manages affairs without action.
Nature herself suffices; he who acts
(artificially) will meet with defeat.
And spreads doctrines without words.
All things arise, and he does not turn away from them.

He produces them but does not take possession of them.

He acts but does not rely on his own ability.

Wisdom itself is complete; he who acts[5] (artificially) is false.

He accomplishes his task but does not claim credit for it.

(The sage) functions by following things.[6] Success comes from them. Therefore (the sage) claims no credit.

It is precisely because he does not claim credit that his accomplishment remains with him.

If success lies in oneself, the accomplishment will not last.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 102, note 1): The Wang Pi text has chiao[b] (to contrast) instead of hsing[c] (to contrast). Evidently Waley (p. 257) has followed Wang Pi, but the Ho-shang Kung and, according to Chiang Hsi-ch'ang, forty-six other texts, have hsing. As Pi Yüan has pointed out, the word chiao is not found in ancient books, and, according to Ma Hsü-lun, whenever the long and the short are contrasted in ancient literature, the word hsing is used. Above all, chiao does not rhyme in the

verse but hsing does. Although both words mean the same, the Chinese character should be hsing.

2. According to Hatano, I, p. 45, the Ku-i ts'ung-shu[d] edition (Ancient and missing texts series) has yüeh-chin[e] (joy or music increases) instead of chin-yüeh (increasingly enjoys), obviously a mistake in reversing the order of the two words.

3. Compare Wang Pi, chapter 18.

4. Ming-shu[f] (clear number) is the same as ming-shu (name and articles) which define and clarify the names and reality of things.

5. According to a Japanese commentator, since this comment seems to be on "spreading doctrines without words," just as the preceding comment is on "manages affairs without action," perhaps the word wei[g] (to act) here should be amended to read yen[h] (to speak). See Hatano, I, p. 49.

6. Yin[i] (to follow [Nature]) is a basic concept in Wang Pi. It is to appear again and again (chapters 27, 36, 41, 45, 49, 51, 56).

CHAPTER 3

Do not exalt the worthy, so that the people shall not compete.

Do not value rare treasures, so that the people shall not steal.

Do not display objects of desire, so that the people's[1] hearts shall not be disturbed.

To be worthy means to be capable. To exalt is to praise, and to value is to glorify. Ability alone should be applied to the task; what is the use of praising (the worthy)? Utility alone should be put into operation; what is the use of valuing (rare treasures)? To exalt the worthy and to make them famous is to cause their fame to exceed their ability. They will then act and always compete[2] to try to overcome[3] one another.[4] When goods are valued beyond their usefulness the avaricious fight for their own benefit; they break through or climb over walls[5] and ransack trunks[6] at the risk of their lives. (Thus) if we do not display objects of desire, then the hearts will not be disturbed.

Therefore in the government of the sage,

He keeps their hearts vacuous,[7]

Fills their bellies,

The heart harbors wisdom and the belly harbors food. Vacuity means wisdom and to be full means to be without cunning.

Weakens their ambitions,

And strengthens their bones,

Bones means to act without cunning. Ambition means to create activities so as to disturb (oneself). When the heart is vacuous, ambition becomes weak.

He always causes his people to be without knowledge (cunning) or desire,

This means to maintain their integrity (truth, realness).

And the crafty to be afraid to act.

Craftiness means to act cunningly.

By acting without action, all things will be in order.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 104, note 4): This word appears in the Wang Pi text but does not appear in the Ho-shang Kung and forty-seven other texts. Its presence is necessary to maintain the parallelism of the three sentences.

2. According to T'ao Hung-ch'ing, the word chiao[a] (to compete) should be repeated, to read wei erh ch'ang-chiao, chiao neng hsiang-she[b] and to make the last sentence contain four characters. It would then read: They will then act and always compete; they will compete to try to overcome one another.

3. T'ao takes hsiang-she[c] to mean hsiang-sheng[d] (to overcome one another).

4. The Tao-te chen-ching chi-chu (Collected commentaries of the Classic of the Way and Virtue) version has yung kuo ch'i jen, hsia-pen erh ching, hsiao-neng hsiang-she[e] (Because their fame exceeds their ability, they will rush to compete and to exert their ability to overcome one another), instead of yung kuo ch'i jen, wei erh ch'ang-chiao, neng hsiang-she[f] (Because their fame exceeds their ability, they will then act and always compete to try to overcome one another).

5. The expression ch'uan-yü[g] (to break through or climb over walls) comes from the Analects, 17:12.

6. The expression t'an-ch'ieh[h] (to ransack trunks) comes from Chuang Tzu, chapter 10 (4:1ba).

7. Chan's note (p. 104, note 5): Hsü[i] (vacuous) is a Taoist term. It is not to be taken in its literal sense of being empty and is not to be equated with the Buddhist k'ung[j], which means emptiness or freedom from specific characteristics. Rather, as a description of a state of mind, it means absolute peacefulness and purity of mind, freedom from worry and selfish desires, not to be disturbed by incoming impressions or to allow what is already in the mind to disturb what is coming into the mind. As a feature of reality, it means a profound and deep continuum in which there is no obstruction.

CHAPTER 4

Tao is empty (like a bowl).
It may be used but its capacity is never exhausted.
It is bottomless, perhaps the ancestor of all things.
It blunts its sharpness,
It unties its tangles,
It softens its light.
It becomes one with the dusty world.
Deep and still, it appears to exist forever.
I do not know whose son it is.
It seems[1] to have existed before the Lord.

He who holds on to the capacity of a family cannot perfect that family. He who holds on to the capacity of a country cannot perfect that country. When you exhaust your strength to lift that which is heavy, you cannot perform that function (yung[a], use). Truly, even if one knows how to bring order into the myriad things but does not do it through the Tao of the two modes,[2] then one cannot bring them to completion. Although the Earth is physical body and soul, if it does not follow Heaven, it cannot preserve its tranquility. Although Heaven is essence and form,[3] if it does not follow Tao, it cannot keep its clarity.[4] Being empty, Tao may be used, and its usefulness cannot be exhausted. Filling it makes for total capacity, and when that capacity is

reached, there will be overflowing. Truly, "empty, it may be used," and yet its capacity is never exhausted. Then its infinity reaches the highest degree. Although its form is big, it will not be trouble for the body. Although there is much to be done, its capacity cannot be exhausted. When the myriad things forsake this (Tao) and seek (another) master, where is another master to be found? Is it not likewise "bottomless, perhaps the ancestor of all things"? It blunts the sharpness but itself is not diminished. The tangles are untied but it will not tire itself. It softens the light but does not soil its body. It becomes one with the dusty world but its true state will not be changed. Is it not "deep and still, it appears to exist forever"? If the Earth keeps its form, then by its virtue it cannot support more than its capacity. If Heaven is contented with its forms, then by its virtue it cannot cover more than its capacity. If Heaven and Earth cannot be compared with it (Tao), does it not "seem to have existed before the Lord"? The Lord (Ti[b]) means the Lord of Heaven.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 106, note 4): The word hsiang[c] here means "seems" and repeats the feeling expressed in the word "appear" two lines before. To interpret it to mean "image" as do Arthur Waley and Duyvendak, or "form"...would be to make the Lao Tzu more metaphysical than it really is.

2. According to Tsukada Taihō and Den Shiryū, erh-i[d] (two molds) here means heaven and earth. However, in Wang Pi, chapter 25, it means having physical form and having no physical form, or original substance and the phenomenal world.

3. Ching-hsiang[e], literally 'psychic phenomenon," means spirit in contrast to hsing-p'o[f] (the physical body).

4. According to Yen Ling-feng, read ching[g] (essence) and ch'ing[h] (clear). In Lao Tzu, chapter 39, it says, "Heaven obtained the One and became clear. Earth obtained the One and became tranquil." Yen also says that the Wang Pi commentary up to this point is originally the commentary on chapter 25. However, Wang Pi often expressed similar ideas in different chapters.

CHAPTER 5

Heaven and Earth are not benevolent.[1]
They regard all things as straw dogs.[2]

Heaven and Earth leave what is natural (Tzu-jan, Self-so) alone. They do nothing and create nothing. The myriad things manage and order themselves. Therefore they are not benevolent. One who is benevolent will create things, set things up, bestow benefits on them and influence them. He gives favors and does something. When he creates, sets things up, bestows benefits on things and influences them, then things will lose their true being. When he gives favors and does something, things will no longer exist completely. When things can no longer exist completely, (heaven and earth) will not be able to cover[3] and carry everything. Animals eat straw, though the earth does not produce it for them. Men eat dogs,[4] though (heaven) does not produce dogs for them. If nothing is done to the myriad things, each will accord with its function, and everything is then self-sufficient. If one builds up favors,[5] it will be impossible to leave things alone.

The sage is not benevolent.
He regards all people as straw dogs.

The sage (in his heart) is one with Heaven

and Earth (has character as Heaven and Earth).[6] For him, people are like straw and dogs.

How Heaven and Earth are like a bellow!
While vacuous, it is never exhausted.
When active, it produces even more.

T'o[a] is a series of bellows. Yüeh[b] is comparable to a flute. The inside of the bellows is empty, without feeling and without action. Therefore, while vacuous, it can never be exhausted, and when moved (used), will never be spent. In the vast and extensive space between heaven and earth they are left alone. Therefore they, like a bellows, cannot be exhausted.

Much talk will, of course,[7] come to a dead end.
It is better to keep to the center.

The more one acts, the more one is mistaken. Things build their evil,[8] and actions bring about the wrong words. They will not do.[9] Do not speak.[10] And do not manage.[11] (Otherwise), one surely comes to a dead end. If the bellows keeps to the center,[12] there will be no exhaustion. If one discards oneself and leaves things alone,[13] then everything will be in order. If the bellows has an intention to produce sound, it cannot fulfill[14] the demand of the blower.

NOTES

1. Chan's translation, "Heaven and Earth are not humane." He noted (p. 108, note 1): Jen[c] (humane) has been variously translated as "love," "benevolence," "human-heartedness," "true manhood," and so on. For a discussion of the translation of this term, see Wing-tsit Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, Appendix, "On Translating Certain Chinese Philosophical Terms."

2. Chan's note (p. 108, note 2): Straw dogs were used for sacrifices in ancient China. After they had been used, they were thrown away and there was no more sentimental attachment to them.

3. According to T'ao Hung-ch'ing, pei[d] (to provide, to complete) is to be taken as pei[e] (to cover).

4. Note that Wang Pi differed from Lao Tzu in considering stray dogs as two separate things. It is astonishing how earthly Wang Pi's interpretation is here.

5. Read hui[f] (wisdom) as hui[g] (favor).

6. Book of Changes, commentary on hexagram no. 1, Ch'ien[h] (Heaven).

7. Chan's note (p. 108, note 3): Practically all translators, including Waley and Duyvendak, take shu[i] to mean "quick," "soon," or "much,"....They find little support among Chinese commentators. According to Wang Pi, it means the principle (li[j])

of things, and Ho-shang Kung has followed him. Lu Te-ming quotes Wang Pi and adds the meaning of shih[k] (tendency). In either case it means the course of things, or their history....

8. T'ao Hung-ch'ing suggests to read o[l] (evil) as hui[m] (wisdom) to conform with "wisdom is built up" above.

9. Some words are probably missing in this sentence.

10. Many commentators regard the two words pu-yen[n] (not to speak) as spurious. The passage here is obscure.

11. Li[o] means to manage. Many commentators have tried to make sense out of it.

12. Shu[p] (number, principle) before chung[q] (center) is clearly spurious.

13. A similar statement is found in Wang Pi, chapter 38.

14. Hatano I, p. 70, quoting various Chinese writers, points out that kung[r] (to share) can also be taken as kung[s] (to fulfill, to supply) or as kung[t] (to bow).

CHAPTER 6

The spirit of the valley never dies.
It is called the subtle and profound female.
The gate of the subtle and profound female[1]
Is the root of Heaven and Earth.
It is continuous, and seems to be always existing.
Use it and you will never wear it out.

The spirit of the valley is comparable to the center of the valley which is nothing,[2] without form, without shadow, without opposing it and without going against it. It remains quite low and does not move. It holds on to quietude and does not decline. The valley[3] is formed by it, but we cannot see its form. This is a perfect thing. It remains so low that we cannot name it. Therefore we call it "the root of Heaven and Earth. It is continuous, and seems to be always existing. Use it and you will never wear it out."[4] The gate is whence the subtle and profound (mysterious) female goes through. Following the path which the female takes, it becomes one body with the ultimate.[5] Therefore it is called the root of Heaven and Earth. If we say it exists, we do not see its form. If we say it does not exist, the myriad things come into existence because of it.[6] Therefore "it is continuous and seems to be always existing."

It completes all things. Use it, and it is never burdened. Therefore it is said, "You will never wear it out."

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 111, note 2): The "Hsiang-erh" commentary interprets ku as "passion" and the gate of the female as the female reproductive organ. Significantly, this sexual interpretation has received no support....

2. Yen Ling-feng, citing a Japanese source (see Hatano, I, p. 71), reads ku[a] (valley) as wu[b] (things). It would then read, "There is nothing in it." This whole commentary was quoted by Chang Chan[c] (fl. 320) in his own commentary of the Lieh Tzu[d] (attributed to Lieh Yü-k'ou[e], 450-375 B.C.?), Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an ed., 1:1b.

3. T'ao Hung-ch'ing substitutes wu for ku, making the sentence to read, "Things are produced by it." In Wang Pi, chapter 41, the sentence is repeated with the word wu.

4. This quotation of the two sentences from the Lao Tzu does not appear in Chang Chan's quotation of the Wang Pi commentary. Both T'ao and Yen therefore think that the quotation should be deleted.

5. Chang Chan has t'ai-chi[f] (great ultimate) instead of simply chi[g] (ultimate). Yen thinks Chang Chan should be followed. However, Chang Chan does not adhere to the Wang Pi commentary strictly.

6. These two sentences, with some variation, also appear in Wang Pi, chapter 14.

CHAPTER 7

Heaven is eternal and Earth everlasting.
They can be eternal and everlasting because they do not exist for themselves.

If one exists for oneself, one will compete with others. If one does not exist for oneself, everything will come to him.
And for this reason can exist forever.
Therefore the sage places himself in the background but finds himself in the foreground.
He puts himself away, and yet he always remains.
Is it not because he has no personal interests?
This is the reason why his personal interests are fulfilled.

Having no personal interests means not doing anything for oneself. One finds himself in the foreground and always remains. It is therefore said, "His personal interests can be fulfilled."

CHAPTER 8

The best (man[1]) is like water.
Water is good; it benefits all things and does not compete with them.
It dwells in (lowly) places that all disdain.

What man hates is lowliness.
This is why it is so near to Tao.

Tao is nonbeing. Water is being. Therefore it is said to be near to (Tao).

(The best man) in his dwelling loves the earth.
In his heart, he loves what is profound.
In his associations, he loves humanity.
In his words, he loves faithfulness.
In government, he loves order.
In handling affairs, he loves competence.
In his activities, he loves timeliness.
It is because he does not compete that he is without reproach.

That means man[2] should always respond to this[3] Tao.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 114, note 1): Most commentators and translators have understood the Chinese phrase literally as the highest good, but some commentators and translators have followed Wang Pi and taken the phrase to mean the best man. Both interpretations are possible. The former interpretation has a parallel in chapter 38, which talks about the highest virtue, while the latter has a parallel in chapter 17, where both Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung interpret "the best" to mean the best ruler. I have followed Wang Pi, not only because his commentary on the text is the oldest and most reliable, but also because the Lao Tzu deals with man's way of life more than abstract ideas.

2. The Tao-te chen-ching chi-chu version has shui[a] (water) instead of jen[b] (man). A number of Chinese and Japanese commentators have followed it. See Hatano, I, p. 77. However, the Lao Tzu also talks about man here.

3. The commentary has chih[c] (order) but some editions, including the Tao-te chen-ching chi-chu, have tz'u[d] (this), which makes better sense. See Hatano, ibid.

CHAPTER 9

To hold and fill a cup to overflowing
Is not as good as to stop in time

To hold means not to lose the virtue. If you (desire) not to lose virtue but wish to increase it, it will inevitably collapse. Therefore it is not as good as to stop in time. That is, it is not so good as to be without virtue and to be without accomplishment.

Sharpen a sword-edge to its very sharpest,
And the (edge) will not last long.

If one sharpens the edge so that it is sharp and continues to sharpen it, the edge will inevitably be broken. Therefore it will not last long.

When gold and jade fill your hall,
You will not be able to keep them.

It is not as good as to stop in time.

To be proud with honor and wealth
Is to cause one's own downfall.

That means it will not last long.

Withdraw as soon as your work is done.[1]
Such is Heaven's Way.

The four seasons rotate. When the work is done, they move on.[2]

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 115, note 2): The Ho-shang Kung and some fifty other texts, according to Chiang Hsi-ch'ang, have kung-ch'eng ming-sui[a] (work done and fame accomplished). Since this stress on fame does not agree with Taoist philosophy, I have preferred kung-sui (work accomplished) in the Wang Pi text.

2. A paraphrase of a saying by Ts'ai Tse[b] (d. c. 221 B.C.) in Shih-chi[c] (Records of the historian, by Ssu-ma Ch'ien[d], 145-86 B.C.), Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an edition, 79:17b.

CHAPTER 10

Can you keep[1] the spirit[2] and embrace the One without departing from them?

To keep[3] is to dwell in it. The spirit is the eternal abode of man.[4] The One is the true nature of man. It means that if you can always dwell in the eternal abode, embrace the One, keep the spirit clear, and are able never to depart from them, "all things would submit spontaneously" (or would be your guests).[5]

Can you concentrate [chuan[a]][6] your vital force and achieve the highest degree of weakness like an infant?

To chuan is to employ and to achieve is to reach the highest degree. It means that if you employ the vital force of Tzu-jan, achieve the harmony of the highest degree of weakness, and are like an infant without desires, things will be preserved and your nature will be obtained.

Can you clean and purify your profound insight so it will be spotless?

What is profound (subtle, mysterious) is the utmost limit of things. It means that if you are able to clean and remove evil and falsehood to arrive at utmost insight[7] and do not let things restrict your insight or injure your spirit, you will finally become one with this

profoundness.[8]

Can you love the people and govern the state without knowledge (cunning)?

To use tricks to achieve accomplishment and to manipulate the course of things and thus to seek to escape (from people) is cunning. Profound insight so that it will be spotless means to abandon sageliness. To govern the state without resorting to cunning means to discard wisdom.[9] If you can do it without cunning, people will not avoid you and the government of the state will be in order.

Can you play the role of the female in the opening and closing of the gates of Heaven?[10]

The gates of Heaven is the place through which the world passes. Opening and closing are the juncture of order and disorder. The successive opening and closing prevail over the whole world. Therefore it is said, "The opening and closing of the gates of Heaven." The female responds but does not lead, follows but does not (deliberately) act. It means that if you can play the role of the female in the opening and closing of the gates of Heaven, all things will submit spontaneously[11] and you will live in peace.

Can you understand all and penetrate all without taking any action?

This means that if you understand perfectly and penetrate all without delusion and are able not to take any (deliberate) action, then things will transform (spontaneously). This is what is meant by saying, "Tao invariably takes no action. If kings and barons can keep it, all things will transform spontaneously."[12]

To produce things

That is, not to block their source.

and to rear them,

That is, not to inhibit their true nature.

To produce, but not to take possession of them,

To act, but not to rely on one's own ability,

To lead them, but not to master them--

This is called profound and secret virtue.

If you do not block the source of things, they will come into being by themselves. What achievement is there? If you do not inhibit the nature of things, things will succeed by themselves. What action is there to rely on? Things grow and become proficent by themselves and I neither master nor complete them. To have virtue without being a master--is that not a subtle (profound mystery)? Whenever one speaks of profound and secret virtue, it always indicates virtue without our knowing who the master is. It comes from secret depths.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 117, note 1): Emperor Ming-huang thinks that tsai[b] (to keep) is interchangeable with tsai[c] (a particle for exclamation) and should be the last word of the preceding chapter. [Some] commentators have followed him. Furthermore, they contend, since all lines of this chapter contain four words except this first line, the word tsai must be superfluous to it. However, it is found in both the Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung texts as well as in their commentaries, and is also found in the passage quoted in the Huai-nan Tzu[d] (by Liu An[e], 179-122 B.C.), Ssu-pu pei-yao[f] (Essentials of the Four Libraries), ed., 12:14a. The phrase tsai ying-p'o[g] appears in a work by Ch'ü Yüan[h] (343-277 B.C.). (See Ch'u tz'u[i] [Elegies of Ch'u], Ssu-pu pei-yao ed., 5:6b.) Furthermore, the two words ying-p'o (the spirit) represent one concept, forming a parallel with the One. Without the word tsai, there would be no verb for "the spirit."

2. Chan's note (p. 117, note 2): Ying-p'o means hun-p'o[j], the heavenly and earthly aspects of the soul. As generally understood, hun is the spirit of man's vital force, expressed in man's intelligence and power of breathing, whereas p'o is the spirit of man's physical nature, expressed

in bodily movement. The "Hsiang-erh" commentary interprets p'o as semen, on the ground that po[k] (white) forms a part of the character p'o and is pronounced like it. Since the "Hsiang-erh" commentary is a Taoist religious text, chiefly concerned with the conservation of human energy in order to prolong life, it has gone so far as to interpret "white" in chapter 28 as semen and "black" as the inside of the female organ, where, it says, it is dark.

3. In the silk manuscript of the Lao Tzu discovered in an ancient tomb at Ma-wang-tui[l], Changsha, in 1974, the word tsai is at the head of the chapter. See Wen-wu[m] (Cultural products) 11 (1974): 12, 18.

4. Chu Hsi[n] (1130-1200) severely criticized this interpretation as "nonesense." To him, the sentence merely means what it says. (Chu Tzu yü-lei[o] (Classified conversations of Master Chu), 1880 ed., 137:5a, but Wang Pi was expounding his own philosophy.

5. Literally, "All will naturally be your guests." Compare Lao Tzu, chapter 32: "Tao is eternal and has no name. Though its simplicity seems insignificant, none in the world can master it. If kings and barons would hold on to it, all things would submit to them spontaneously."

6. Chan's note (p. 117, note 3): Chuan means neither ["to follow"] as Wang Pi thinks, nor "to

employ," as Ho-shang Kung thinks, but "to concentrate," according to Chu Hsi. See Chu Tzu yü-lei, 125:10a.

7. In version B of the silk manuscript of the Lao Tzu, the word is chien[p], meaning a mirror (to look at a pool of water to see one's own reflection), and in version A it is lan[q] (blue), a corruption of chien. See Wen-wu, 11, 18 and 12, respectively.

8. Compare Lao Tzu, chapter 56: "He who knows does not speak. He who speaks does not know. Close the mouth. Shut the doors. Blunt the sharpness. Untie the tangles. Soften the light. Become one with the dusty world. This is called profound identification."

9. Compare Lao Tzu, chapter 19: "Abandon sageliness and discard wisdom; then the people will benefit a hundredfold."

10. Chan's note (p. 118, note 8): Ho-shang Kung says the heavenly gates refer to the place in the Polar Star where the Lord of Heaven is. He is definitely confusing Taoist philosophy with later Taoist religion. Modern writers have explained it in terms of the senses, or specifically the ears, mouth, and nose, or the alternation of activity and tranquility in the operation of Nature, or the spiritual and mental activities of man. Most writers, however, are satisfied with Wang Pi's explanation that which means the way of Nature. In the Chuang Tzu chapter 23 (8:13b), it means "non-being," In his

commentary on the passage in the Chuang Tzu. Kuo Hsiang[r] (d. 312) says that the gate of Heaven is a general name for all things and that it is the same as "the door of all subtleties" in chapter 1 of the Lao Tzu....Waley thinks p'o is literally "semen" and that "opening and closing" alludes to a sexual technique.

11. Compare Lao Tzu, chapter 32.

12. This sentence appears in Lao Tzu, chapter 37.

CHAPTER 11

Thirty spokes are united around the hub to make a wheel,
But it is on its nonbeing that the utility of the carriage depends.
The reason why the hub unites and controls or leads thirty spokes is due to its nonbeing.
Because of its nonbeing, it can accept all.
It really[1] guides all.
Clay is molded to form a utensil,
But it is on its nonbeing that the utility of the utensil depends.
Doors and windows are cut out to make a room,
But it is on its nonbeing that the utility of the room depends.
Therefore turn being into advantage, and turn nonbeing into utility.
The reason why wood, clay, and wall can make these three things is because all function through their nonbeing. Nonbeing means to turn being into advantage. They all rely on nonbeing to be useful (to function).[2]

NOTES

1. Here commentators are unclear. Various suggestions have been made to read shih[a] (really) as shih[b] (is), kua[c] (few), and chih[d] (perfect). See Hatano, I, p. 92.

2. A similar sentence appears in Wang Pi, chapter 1, translated there as: To be useful, it has to function through nonbeing. It also appears in Wang Pi, chapter 40.

CHAPTER 12

The five colors[1] cause one's eyes to be blind.
The five tones cause one's ears to be deaf.
The five flavors cause one's palate to be spoiled.
Racing and hunting cause one's mind to be mad.

To be spoiled means something has gone wrong. It is said to be spoiled because the function of the mouth has been lost. Ears, eyes, mouth (palate), and heart should all follow their own nature. If one does not use them to accord with his nature and destiny but instead to injure his just-so-ness (Tzu-jan), then one is said to be deaf, blind, spoiled, and mad.

Goods that are hard to get injure one's activities.

Goods that are hard to get obstruct one's direct road (and) therefore injure one's activities.

For this reason the sage is concerned with the belly and not the eyes.
Therefore he rejects the one but accepts the other.

Being concerned with the belly means to nourish oneself with things. Being concerned with the eyes means to enslave oneself by things. For this reason the sage is not concerned with the eyes.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 121, note 1): The five colors are blue, yellow, red, white, and black; the five sounds, the five full tones in the Chinese musical scale; the five tastes, salty, bitter, sour, acrid, and sweet. These fivefold classifications have resulted from the theory of Five Agents or Elements, which conceives things to be results of the interactions of the Five Agents, namely, Water, Fire, Wood, Metal, and Earth. Many things have been formed in sets of five to correspond to them.

CHAPTER 13

Be apprehensive when receiving favor or disgrace.
Regard great trouble as seriously as you regard
your body.

What is meant by being apprehensive when receiving
favor or disgrace?

Favor is considered inferior.

Be apprehensive when you receive them and also be
apprehensive when you lose them.

This is what is meant by being apprehensive when
receiving favor or disgrace.

Favor is certainly followed by disgrace and
honor is certainly followed by trouble.

Favor[1] and disgrace are equal, and honor and
trouble are the same. If a subject is
apprehensive when receiving favor,[2] disgrace,
honor, or trouble, he cannot be trusted with
the empire.

What does it mean to regard great trouble as
seriously as you regard the body?

Great trouble belongs to the same category as
honor and favor. "The fulness of life leads
surely to death."[3] Therefore it is called
"great trouble." When one is deluded by honor
and favor, (the effect) will fall back on the
person. Therefore it is said that the great
trouble is (to be regarded) as one's body
(person).

The reason why I have great trouble is that I have
a body.

(Trouble) arises because I have a body.

If I have no body,

(because of) the return to Tzu-jan.

What trouble could I have?

Therefore he who values the world as his body may
be entrusted with the empire.

Nothing can change the body. Therefore it is
said to regard it seriously. Only when one
does so can he be entrusted with the empire.

He who loves the world as his body may be entrusted
with the empire.

Nothing can hurt the body. Therefore it is
said to love it. Only when one does so can
he be entrusted with the empire. Only when one
neither hurts nor changes his body with favor,
disgrace, honor, or trouble can one be entrusted
with the empire.

NOTES

1. The Lao Tzu text has ching[a] (apprehensive), but as many writers have pointed out, judged by the preceding sentences, ching is obviously a misprint for ch'ung[b] (favor).

2. Chan's note (p. 123, note 3): Wang Pi's text has: "favor is inferior" and the expression can be understood as favor received by those in inferior positions. Wang Pi has commented on it in this sense. Ho-shang Kung, on the other hand, has "disgrace is inferior." According to Chiang Hsi-ch'ang, nine other texts agree with Ho-shang Kung. Thirty-two have "favor is inferior" and six have "favor is superior and disgrace inferior."

3. Compare Lao Tzu, chapter 50.

CHAPTER 14

We look at it and do not see it;
Its name is The Invisible.
We listen to it and do not hear it;
Its name is The Inaudible.
We touch it and do not find it;
Its name is The Subtle (formless).[1]
These three cannot be further inquired into,
And hence merge into one.

Because it has no shape, no form, no sound, and no echo, there is nothing it cannot penetrate and nowhere it cannot go. It cannot be known. Furthermore, I do not know its name[2] by my ears, eyes, or body. Therefore they cannot further be inquired into, and hence merge into one.

Going up high, it is not bright, and coming down low, it is not dark.
Infinite and boundless, it cannot be given any name;
It reverts to nothingness.
This is called shape without shape,
Form without objects.

If we say it does not exist, the myriad things come to completion because of it. If we say it exists, we do not see its form.[3] Therefore it is said, "Shape without shape. Form without objects."

It is The Vague and Elusive.

It is indefinable.

Meet it and you will not see its head.

Follow it and you will not see its back.

Hold on to the Tao of old in order to master the things of the present.

Things (affairs) means events that take place.

From this one may know the primeval beginning (of the universe).

This is called the bond[4] of Tao.

The formless and nameless is the ancestor of the myriad things. Although present and past are not the same, time changes, and customs alter, yet through it all things fully obtain their order.[5] Therefore it is possible to "hold on to the Tao of old in order to master the things of the present." Although antiquity is far away, its Tao still exists. Therefore, though we are in the present, we can know the primeval beginning.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 125, note 7): The Doctrine of the Mean, chapters 1, 33.

2. Yen Ling-feng suggests that ming[a] (name) should read ho[b] (what?), that is, what it is.

3. The two sentences also appear in Wang Pi, chapter 6.

4. Chan's note (p. 125, note 8): Ch'eng I[c] (1033-1107), Preface to the I chuan[d] (Commentary on the Book of Changes).

5. Yen argues that chih[e] (order) should be read shih[f] (beginning) to conform with "beginning" at the end of the commentary.

CHAPTER 15

Of old those who were the best rulers were subtly
mysterious and profoundly penetrating;
Too deep to comprehend.
And because they cannot be comprehended,
I can only describe them arbitrarily:
Cautious like crossing a frozen stream in the winter,
Cautious like crossing a frozen stream in the winter, as though they wished and yet did not wish to go over. Their feeling is impossible to perceive.
Being at a loss, like one fearing danger on all sides,
When the four neighbors (all sides) attack, the master of the center is at a loss and does not know in what direction to go. The clues of people of high virtue cannot be seen, and their intentions[1] cannot be known. They also are like these (two examples).
Reserved, like one visiting,[2]
Supple and pliant, like ice about to melt,
Genuine, like a piece of uncarved wood,
Open and broad, like a valley,
Merged and indifferentiated, like muddy water.[3]
The word "like" in these sentences mean that appearances and forms in these cases are not describable.
Who can make muddy water gradually clear through tranquility?

Who can make the still gradually come to life through activity?
Through principle (li[a]), obscure things become brilliant. Through tranquility, muddy things become clear. Through activity, still things will come to life. This is the Tao of Tzu-jan. "He who makes...?" describes the difficulty of the task. "Gradually" means thoroughness and caution.
He who embraces this Tao does not want to fill himself to overflowing.
"Fill to overflowing" means that it will certainly go over the brim.
It is precisely because there is no overflowing that he is beyond wearing out and renewal.
Pi means to cover.[4]

NOTES

1. This sentence also appears in Wang Pi, chapter 17. There te-ch'ü[b] (virtue-interest) reads i-ch'ü[c] (intention). According to T'ao Hung-ch'ing, te-ch'ü here should read i-ch'ü also.

2. Chan's note (p. 127, note 3): Jung[d] (appearance, attitude) in the Wang Pi text but k'o[e] (guest) in the Ho-shang Kung, Fu I, and fifty-one other texts mentioned by Chiang Hsi-ch'ang. K'o rhymes with the four following lines; jung does not. It is interesting that Waley has written a long commentary on jung (for this chapter), but chooses k'o here instead of jung.

3. Chan's note (p. 127, note 4): The sevenfold description may suggest a progression, or seven categories of moral cultivation, but there is no need to treat the Lao Tzu so systematically.

4. Most commentators feel that Wang Pi's interpretation of pi[f] as "to cover" does not make sense and that pi here is the same as pi[g] (worn out) in Lao Tzu, chapter 22.

CHAPTER 16

Attain complete vacuity.

Maintain steadfast quietude.

This is to say that attaining vacuity is the utmost steadfastness (seriousness) of things, and maintaining quietude is the true correctness of things.

All things come into being,

That is, to be active and to grow.

And I see thereby their return.

The return is to be seen in vacuity and quietude. Being arises out of vacuity and movement arises out of quietude. Therefore although the myriad things act together, finally they will return to vacuity and quietude. That is the ultimate steadfastness of things.

All things flourish,

But each one returns to its root.

Each thing returns to its origin.

This return to its root means tranquility.

It is called returning to its destiny.

To return to destiny is called the eternal (Tao).

If one returns to one's root, one will be tranquil. Therefore it is called tranquility. When one is tranquil, one returns to one's destiny. Therefore it is called returning to one's destiny. When one returns to one's destiny, one attains the eternity of nature

and destiny. Therefore it is called the eternal.

To know the eternal is called enlightenment.

Not to know the eternal is to act blindly to result in disaster. This thing called eternal is neither partial nor prominent.[1] There is no appearance of light or darkness and no manifestation of heat or cold. Therefore it is said, "To know the eternal is called enlightenment." Only by this return can one embrace and penetrate all things so that nothing is not contained. If one is mistaken from this point on, evil enters into one's lot and things will be separated from their lot[2] (nature). Therefore it is said, "Not to know the eternal is to act blindly to result in disaster."

He who knows the eternal is all-embracing.

There is nothing that is not embraced or penetrated.

Being all-embracing, he is impartial.

When he embraces and penetrates everything, he reaches the point of complete impartiality.

Being impartial, he is kingly (universal).[3]

When he is completely impartial, he reaches the point of universality.

Being kingly, he is one with Nature.

When he is universal, he will reach the point of forming a unity with Heaven (Nature).

Being one with Nature, he is in accord with Tao.

When he becomes one with Heaven in virtue,[4] embracing Tao and becoming pervasive, he will reach the point of achieving extreme[5] vacuity and nothingness.

Being in accord with Tao, he is everlasting.

When he achieves vacuity and nothingness to the infinite and extreme degree and attains the eternal of Tao, he will reach the point of having no limit.

And is free from danger throughout his lifetime.

This thing called nonbeing cannot be hurt by water or fire, or destroyed by metal or stone. If one exercises it in the mind, the tiger cannot bite its teeth, and the wild buffalo cannot butt its horns, and weapons of war cannot thrust their blades into him.[6] Where would there be any danger?

NOTES

1. The same phrase appears in Wang Pi, chapter 35.

2. Fen[a] (lot, part, or to divide) hardly makes sense here. T'ao Hung-ch'ing suggests that fen in the first instance should read chih[b] (knowledge) and Yen Ling-feng suggests that fen in the second instance should read chen[c] (true). The idea of fen (part or lot) appears in Wang Pi, chapters 25 and 41.

3. Chan's note (p. 129, note 2): "[Some texts] have sheng[d] (to produce) instead of wang (kingly) . . . Ma Hsü-lun thinks that sheng is a corruption of wang[e], which in turn is a corruption of chou[f] (universial...."

4. Book of Changes, commentary on hexagram number 1, Ch'ien[g]: "The great man accords in his character with Heaven and Earth." Compare Wang Pi, chapter 5.

5. According to T'ao, chi[h] (extreme) should read ch'iung-chi[i] (infinite and extreme) as in the following sentence.

6. Paraphrasing Lao Tzu, chapter 50.

CHAPTER 17

The best[1] (rulers) are those whose existence is
(merely) known by the people.[2]
The best rulers are great men.[3] The great men
are above, Therefore it is said that (they are)
the best rulers. The rulers are really above.
They dwell in "managing affairs without action
and spread doctrines without words.[4] All
things arise, and they do not claim to be their
source." Therefore people merely know that
they exist. That means they follow the rulers
above.
The next best are those who are loved and praised.
(Although the rulers above) cannot manage
affairs without taking action or spread doctrines
without words, they establish the good things
and spread them among the people so that people
below love and praise them.
The next are those who are feared.
They can no longer command things by grace and
benevolence but rely on force and power.
And the next are those who are despised.
They cannot regulate[5] people in the correct
way but govern the empire by strategy (cunning).
The people know how to avoid them, and their
orders are not followed. Therefore it is said
that they are despised.
It is only when one does not have enough faith in

others that others will have no faith in him. If one does not control one's body in accordance with nature, then one becomes ill. If one does not help a thing according to its true being, then evil flaws and quarrels arise. "It is only when one does not have enough faith in others that others will have no faith in him." This is the Tao of Tzu-jan. When this insufficiency is already felt, there is nothing which could be accomplished by strategy (completely).

(The great rulers) value their words highly. They accomplish their task; they complete their work. Nevertheless their people say that they simply follow Nature.

The beginning of Tzu-jan and the omens are not visible. The intentions (of the great rulers) cannot be seen.[6] There is nothing which could change their words, for if they speak, there will certainly be response. Therefore it is said, "They value their words highly." They "manage affairs without action and spread doctrines without words." They establish things without forms. Therefore "they accomplish their task; they complete their work" and people do not know why this is so.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 130, note 1): T'ai-shang[a] [the highest] is understood by Ho-shang Kung as the highest in time, that is, antiquity, but by most others as the highest in virtue.

2. Chan's note (p. 130, note 2): [Some texts] have pu[b] (not) instead of hsia[c] (people). [Another text] has hsia-pu. In these cases the meaning is that the people did not know of the existence of their government. This version has been accepted by some modern scholars and translators.

3. T'ai-shang can mean either "great antiquity" or "great men on high". In view of what follows in Lao Tzu, Wang Pi's interpretation is correct.

4. Compare Lao Tzu, chapters 2 and 43. A similar statement is found in Wang Pi, chapters 23 and 63.

5. The word fa[d] (law) is superfluous, most scholars agree.

6. Similar ideas are expressed in Wang Pi, chapter 15.

CHAPTER 18

When the great Tao declined,
The doctrine of humanity and righteousness arose.
If one has lost the state of taking no action
and, furthermore, establishes the good[1] by
using strategy, that means[2] pushing things.
When knowledge and wisdom appeared,
There emerged great hypocrisy.
If one applies methods and uses intelligence
to identify the treacherous, his intentions
can be observed and his form (appearance)
can be seen. People will know and avoid him.
Therefore when knowledge and wisdom appear, the
great hypocrisy emerges.
When the six family relationships are not in harmony,
There will be the advocacy of filial piety and deep
love to children.
When a country is in disorder,
There will be the praise of loyal ministers.
Out of great evil arises the name of the
highest good, as it is said that good and evil
belong in the same family.[3] The six family
relationships are: father and son,[4] elder
and younger brothers, and husband and wife.
If these six relationships are naturally in
harmony, and if the empire is naturally in
complete order, then one does not know where
filial piety, deep love for children, and loyal

ministers are to be found. If the fishes
forget the Tao of rivers and lakes,[5] then
the need (virtue) to help each other arises.

NOTES

1. Compare Wang Pi, chapter 5, commentary on the first two lines of Lao Tzu, chapter 5.

2. Hatano, I, p. 127, says that the character tao[a] got into the text by mistake because it resembles the character chin[b] (to advance, to push), but it can mean "it means" here.

3. Compare Wang Pi, chapter 2.

4. Certain editions have "mother" but that would duplicate the relationship of husband and wife and omit the relationship of parents and children.

5. Quoting Chuang Tzu, chapter 6 (3:8b).

CHAPTER 19

Abandon sageliness and discard wisdom;
Then the people will benefit a hundredfold.
Abandon humanity and discard righteousness;
Then the people will return to filial piety and
deep love.
Abandon skill and discard profit;
Then there will be no thieves or robbers.
However, these three things are ornaments (wen[a])[1]
and are not adequate.
Therefore let people hold on to these:
Manifest plainness,
Embrace simplicity,
Reduce selfishness,
Have few desires.

Sageliness and wisdom are the benison[2] in a talent. Humanity and righteousness are the benison in a human being. Skill and benefit are the benison in a function. And yet the text just says to abandon them. Ornaments are greatly inadequate. If people are not enabled to hold on to something, there is nothing by which they will perceive the fundamentals. Therefore it is said, "These three things are ornaments and are not adequate." Hence let people hold on to something: hold on to plainness, simplicity, and having few desires.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 132, note 2): The word wen has many meanings--adornment, culture, literature, social systems, education, words, argument, superficiality, artificiality, grain, pattern, and so on--and has led to various translations, perhaps more diverse than any other word.

2. One edition has chieh[b] (outstanding) instead of shan[c] (good, praiseworthy, benison).

CHAPTER 20

Abandon learning and there will be no sorrow.[1]

How much difference is there between "Yes, sir," and "Of course not"?

How much difference is there between "good" and "evil"?

What people dread, do not fail to dread.

In Part II (it is said), "The pursuit of learning is to increase day after day. The pursuit of Tao is to decrease day after day."[2] This being the case, learning is to increase one's ability and to improve one's knowledge. If we are without desires and are content, why should we seek to increase our knowledge? If we reach (hit) the target without knowledge, why then pursue progress? Swallows have mates and doves have companions.[3] People who live in cold places naturally know the particular furs. Thus that which is natural suffices, and to exceed it will cause trouble. Thus to lengthen the feet of the duck is not different from cutting the skin bone of the crane.[4] If one wishes to advance out of fear[5] for one's reputation, how does that differ from fearing punishment? "Yes, sir," and "Of course not," "good" and "evil"--how far do they differ? Therefore what people dread, I dread also. I dare not depend on that in order to become

useful.

But, alas, how confused, and the end is not yet.[6]

I sigh that I differ so much from the vulgar or ordinary person.

The multitude are merry, as though feasting on a day of sacrifice.

Or like ascending a tower in the springtime.

The multitude are deluded by beauty and progress and become influenced (confused) by glory and profit. They want to advance and rival in their hearts. Therefore "the multitude are merry, as though feasting on a day of sacrifice. Or like ascending a tower in the springtime."

I alone am inert, showing no sign (of desires),

Like an infant that has not yet smiled.

That is, I am empty; I have no form one can put a name to and no noticeable signs that can be indicated, "like an infant that has not yet smiled."

Wearied, indeed, I seem to be without a home.

As though I were homeless.

The multitude all possess more than enough.

I alone seem to have lost all.

The multitude have things they cherish. They have designs (thoughts, ambitions), and thus the whole heart is filled to overflowing. Therefore it is said, "The multitude all possess more than enough." I alone am empty,

without action, without desires, as though I would lose (everything).

Mine is indeed the mind of an ignorant man,

In the heart of absolutely ignorant people, there is no place in which to make any distinction. In their reflections (thoughts), there is neither wish nor desire. Since that is so, these feelings cannot be discerned.

I am like this, as though falling in completely.

Indiscriminate and dull!

As there is nothing that I would discriminate, there is nothing to be named.[7]

Common folk are indeed brilliant;

That is, they let their brightness dazzle.

I alone seem to be in the dark.

Common folk see differences and are clear-cut;

That means to differentiate and analyze (to make distinctions).

I alone make no distinctions.

I seem drifting as the sea;

The feelings are invisible.

Like the wind blowing about, seemingly without destination.

There is nothing that can be caught hold of and held on to.

The multitude all have a purpose;

That means (all) have a function; all long for application and function.

I alone seem to be stubborn and rustic.

If there is nothing I would like to do, I am closed (making no distinctions) and dark as though I knew nothing. Therefore one speaks of being stubborn and, moreover, rustic.

I alone differ from others.

And value drawing sustenance from Mother (Tao)

Drawing sustenance from Mother is the root of life. All others reject the root which gives life to people, but honor the flower or unimportant ornaments. Therefore it is said, "I alone differ from others."

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 135, note 1): This line is definitely out of place here. Because it rhymed in ancient times with the last two lines of the preceding chapter, because like them it contains four words, and because it expresses a similar idea, many scholars...have shifted it to the end of the last chapter.....[Others]...have transferred it to the beginning of the preceding chapter, for the reason that like the first three sentences it begins with "abandon."...

2. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 48.

3. This may be a quotation, but it is not found in the Thirteen Confucian Classics or the Chuang Tzu.

4. Quoting Chuang Tzu, chapter 8 (4:4a).

5. To stand in awe of fame.

6. Chan's note (p. 135, note 2): Yang[a] literally means "dawn," but it also means "the end," "limit," "to stop," and so on.

7. Read ming[b] (bright) as ming[c] (name), according to several old editions. See Hatano, I, p. 143.

CHAPTER 21

The all-embracing quality of the great[1] virtue follows alone from the Tao.

K'ung[a] (great) means empty. Only if one considers emptiness as a virtue can one in one's activities follow Tao.

The thing that is called Tao is eluding and vague.

Eluding and vague is the description[2] of that being which is without form and without attachment.

Vague and eluding, there is in it the form.

Eluding and vague, in it are things.

In formlessness, things begin; by being unattached, things are accomplished. The myriad things begin and are accomplished in this way and we do not know why this is so. Therefore it is said, "Vague and eluding, eluding and vague, there is in it the form."

Deep and obscure, in it is the essence.

"Deep and obscure" is the description[3] of depth and distance. As it is deep and distant, we cannot see it. But the myriad things follow it, and thus it can be seen, and its truth (reality) can be determined. Therefore it is said, "Deep and obscure, in it is the essence."

The essence is very real; in it are evidences.

Evidences mean proof. If things return to depth and to obscurity, then the ultimate of true

essence can be obtained and the nature (reality) of the myriad things can be determined. Therefore it is said, "The essence is very real, in it are evidences."

From the time of old until now, its name (manifestations) ever remains.

The ultimate of perfect truth is unnameable. "Nameless" is its name. From the time of old until now, there is nothing which does not reach completion in this way. Therefore it is said, "From the time of old until now, its name ever remains."

By which we may see the beginning of all things.

The beginning of all things means the onset of (all) things. Here the nameless is used to explain[4] the beginning of all things.

How do I know that the beginnings of all things are so?

Through this (Tao).

This is what is said above. It means: How do I know that the beginning of all things arises out of nonbeing? Through this (Tao) I know.

NOTES

1. Wang Pi speaks here of empty virtue.

2. The Wang Pi text has t'an[b] (to sigh), a misprint, according to some scholars, for mao[c] (appearance). See Hatano, II, p. 2.

3. See note 2.

4. According to Chang Hsi-ch'ang, shuo[d] (to explain) here was originally yüeh[e] (to see) used in the Lao Tzu text but the meaning of both words is the same. Yen Ling-feng has followed him.

CHAPTER 22

To yield is to be preserved whole.

If one does not show oneself, his brilliance will be preserved.

To be bent is to become straight.

If one does not justify oneself, one's justification will be prominent.

To be empty is to be full.

If one does not boast, credit will be given him.

To be worn out is to be renewed.

If one does not brag, one's virtue will endure for long.[1]

To have little is to possess.

To have plenty is to be perplexed.

The Tao of Tzu-jan is like a tree. The more it grows (to have plenty), the more distant it is from the roots; the less it grows (to have little), the less distant it is from the roots. If one always increases, then one becomes removed from the true essence. Therefore it is said to be perplexed. If there is little, one reaches one's roots. Therefore it is said to possess.

Therefore the sage embraces the One
And becomes the model of the world.

The One means the ultimate of the little. A model implies something to follow.

He does not show himself; therefore he is luminous.

He does not justify himself; therefore he becomes prominent.

He does not boast of himself; therefore he is given credit.

He does not brag; therefore he can endure for long.

It is precisely because he does not compete that the world cannot compete with him.

Is the ancient saying, "To yield is to be preserved whole," empty words?

Truly he will be preserved and (prominence and credit) will come to him.

NOTES

1. Compare this and the three preceding comments with similar statements in Lao Tzu, chapter 24.

CHAPTER 23

Nature says few words.

"We listen to it and do not hear it; its name is The Inaudible."[1] In a later chapter it is said, "But the words uttered by Tao, how insipid and tasteless! We look at it; it is inperceptible. We listen to it; it is inaudible."[2] If that is so, then there are (words) without taste and one cannot actually hear them. These are then perfect words of Tzu-jan.

For the same reason a whirlwind does not last a whole morning.

Nor does a rainstorm last a whole day.

What causes them?

It is Heaven and Earth (Nature).

If even Heaven and Earth cannot make them last long,

How much less can man?

It means that whatever rises violently and suddenly[3] will not last long.

Therefore he who follows Tao is identified with Tao.

To follow means to do, which means that all activities follow Tao; Tao accomplishes and orders the myriad things by the formless and by taking no action. Therefore those who follow Tao consider taking no action as the master[4] and they teach without words.[5] "It is continuous, and seems to be always existing."[6] and things obtain their true (essence) and will

have the same substance[7] with Tao. Therefore it is said to be identified with Tao.

He who follows virtue is identified with virtue.

Virtue[8] means little.[9] "To have little is to possess (have virtue)." Therefore it is said to have virtue. If one acts virtuously, then one will have the same substance with virtue. Therefore it is said to be identified with virtue.

He who abandons (Tao) is identified with the abandonment (of Tao).

To abandon (to lose) means to have much trouble. If you have too much trouble, you will lose. Therefore it is said to lose. If one acts with abandonment, then one will have the same substance with abandonment. Therefore it is said to be identified with abandonment.

He who is identified with Tao--Tao is also happy to have him.

He who is identified with virtue--virtue is also happy to have him.

And he who is identified with the abandonment (of Tao)--the abandonment (of Tao) is also happy to abandon him.

This means that whatever you follow in your acts will respond to and be identified with you.

It is only when one does not have enough faith in others that others will have no faith in him. "If you are not loyal and faithful enough to people below you, they will not trust you."[10]

NOTES

1. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 14.

2. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 35.

3. Following this, there is the word mei[a] which in its ordinary meaning of "beautiful" or "to praise" does not make sense here. Commentators have substituted for it with various words without any real improvement. Others say the word is spurious. See Hatano, II, p. 13.

4. Here we have i wu-wei wei chün[b] (considering taking no action as the master). In Wang Pi, chapter 63, we have i wu-wei wei chü[c] (dwelling in taking no action). Pointing this out, Chiang Hsi-ch'ang says chün should be read chü. See similar statements in Wang Pi, chapter 17 and compare Lao Tzu, chapters 2 and 43.

5. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 43.

6. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 6.

7. The word here is t'i[d] (substance or having the same substance), a very important concept in Wang Pi.

8. Te[e] (to obtain) and te[f] (virtue) are interchangeable.

9. This sentence makes no sense, but the following sentence in quotation marks appears in Lao Tzu, chapter 22. There Wang Pi's comment says literally, "The less it has, the more it obtains (gets to) the root," meaning that the less it grows, the less distant it is from the root.

10. Paraphrasing Lao Tzu, chapter 17.

CHAPTER 24

He who stands on tiptoe is not steady.

If one esteems advancement, then one loses serenity. Therefore it is said, "He who stands on tiptoe is not steady."

He who strides forward does not go.

He who shows himself is not luminous.

He who justifies himself is not prominent.

He who boasts of himself is not given credit.

He who brags does not endure for long.

From the point of view of Tao, these are like remnants of food and tumors of action.

Looked at as if by Tao, the conduct of Chüeh Chih[a1] was like what is left over after a big meal. Although in itself beautiful, it is nevertheless rotten. Although originally successful, if one boasts, then it is as though one had a tumor.

Which all creatures detest.

Therefore those who possess Tao turn away from them.

NOTE

1. Chüeh Chih, chief officer of the feudal state of Chin[b], boasted that none equaled him in faithfulness, wisdom, and courage. See Tso-chuan[c] (Tso's commentary, by Tso Ch'iu-ming[d], 6th century B.C.), Duke Ch'eng[e], 16th year, (603 B.C.), sec. 11, and Shih-chi, 39:35b-36a.

CHAPTER 25

There was something undifferentiated and yet complete,

Which existed before heaven and earth.

Undifferentiated, it is not knowable, but the myriad things become complete because of it. Therefore it is said, "Undifferentiated and yet complete," "I do not know whose son it is,"[1] and therefore (it seems) to have existed before heaven and earth.

Soundless and formless, it depends on nothing and does not change.

Soundless and formless means being without form or body, and nothing can be compared to it. Therefore it is said, "It depends on nothing." Returning and changing, beginning and ending, it does not lose its constancy. Therefore it is said, "It does not change."

It operates everywhere and is free from danger.

It may be considered the mother of the universe.

It operates everywhere and reaches everywhere but avoids the danger.[2] That means it can live and preserve its great form. Therefore it may be considered the mother of the universe.

I do not know its name;

A name determines a form. What is undifferentiated, complete, and formless cannot be determined. Therefore it is said, "I do not

know its name."

I call it Tao.

A name is to determine a form, and to call it so is to give a name to that which can be named. The name Tao is chosen because nothing does not go through it.[3] This (Tao) is the greatest of the nameable (apparition) among the undifferentiated and yet complete.

If forced to give it a name, I shall call it Great.

The reason I call it Tao is because I chose the greatest from all that can be used as a name. If you inquire into the reason of how the term is determined, the answer is that it is attached to the great. Whatever is attached to the great necessarily has its limited part or lot. Having its limited part or lot, it loses its ultimate. Therefore, it is said, "If forced to give it a name, I shall call it Great."

Now being great means functioning everywhere.

Functioning everywhere means to go on and not to hold on to any great substance. Yet it has already operated everywhere and reached everything. Therefore it is said to be functioning everywhere.

Functioning everywhere means far-reaching.

Being far-reaching means returning to the original point.

Being far-reaching means the ultimate. It reaches everywhere and reaches every limit, and

is not confined to one function. Therefore it is said to be far-reaching. It does not follow wherever it goes, because its substance is independent. Therefore it is said to return to the original point.

Therefore Tao is great.

Heaven is great.

Earth is great.

And the king[4] is also great.

In the nature of Heaven and Earth, the human being is the most valuable,[5] and the king is the master of men. Although his position is not great, he is still great. He is the match of the three. Therefore it is said, "The king is also great."

There are four great things in the universe,

The four great things are Tao, Heaven, Earth, and the king. Whenever a thing is callable or nameable, then (what is named) is not its ultimate. If one calls it Tao, it is because things come from it.[6] Because things come from it, we call it Tao. This is what is great in the nameable, but it is not as good as what is great in the unnameable. What is uncallable cannot be named. [We reluctantly] call it universe. Tao, Heaven, Earth, and the king are all within the unnameable. Therefore it is said, "There are four great things in the universe."

And the king is one of them.

He is great as the master of men.

Man models himself after Earth.

Earth models itself after Heaven.

Heaven models itself after Tao.

And Tao models itself after Nature [Tzu-jan].

To model means to follow. Man does not oppose Earth and therefore can comfort all things, for his standard is the Earth. Earth does not oppose Heaven and therefore can sustain all things, for its standard is Heaven. Heaven does not oppose Tao and therefore can cover all things, for its standard is Tao.[7] Tao does not oppose Tzu-jan and therefore it attains its nature. To follow Nature as its standard is to model after the square while within the square and the circle while within the circle, and not to oppose Nature in any way. By Nature is meant something that cannot be labeled and something ultimate. To use knowledge is not as good as to have no knowledge. Body and soul are not as good as essence and form. Essence and form are not as good as the formless. That with modes is not as good as that without modes.[8] Hence these model after one another. Because Tao obeys Nature, Heaven relies on it. Because Heaven models after Tao, Earth follows Heaven as its principle. Because Earth models after

Heaven, man uses Earth as his form,[9] and thus becomes the master. The master is the one who combines things as One.

NOTES

1. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 4.

2. Read shih[a] (beginning) as tai[b] (danger). Shih is clearly a misprint.

3. Compare Wang Pi, chapter 51.

4. Chan's note (p. 145, note 1): [some texts] have "man" in place of "king." This substitution has been accepted by Ma Hsü-lun [and others]. They have been influenced, undoubtedly, by the concept of the trinity of Heaven, Earth, and man, without realizing that the king is considered here as representative of men. Moreover, in chapters 16 and 39, Heaven, Earth, and the king are spoken of together.

5. Quoting Hsiao-ching[c] (Classic of filial piety), chapter 9.

6. Compare Wang Pi, chapter 51.

7. Compare Wang Pi, chapter 4.

8. For the idea of two modes or molds, see Wang Pi, chapter 4.

9. This passage from the second sentence on is translated by Wing-tsit Chan and is quoted from his A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, pp. 321, 322.

CHAPTER 26

The heavy is the root of the light.
The tranquil is the ruler of the hasty.

In general, things that are light cannot carry the heavy and things that are small cannot subdue the great. He who does not walk causes the walk. He who does not move controls the movement. Therefore the heavy is certainly the root of the light and the tranquil is certainly the master of the hasty.

Therefore the sage travels all day
Without leaving his baggage.

He considers the heavy to be the root. Therefore (he) does not leave his baggage.

Even at the sight of magnificent scenes,
He remains leisurely and indifferent.

He does not pay any attention.

How is it that a lord with ten thousand chariots
Should behave lightheartedly in his empire?
If he is lighthearted, the minister[1] will be destroyed.
If he is hasty, the ruler is lost.

Being lighthearted means being unable to subdue the heavy. One loses the root because one loses the body. The master is lost because the position of ruler is lost.

NOTE

1. Chan's note (p. 146, note 4): The word "root," rather than "minister," appears in the Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung and many other texts. Many texts have "minister," which rhymed with the word for ruler.

CHAPTER 27

A good traveler leaves no track or trace.

If one acts according to Tzu-jan without creating or starting things, things will reach their goal and leave no track or trace.

A good speech leaves no flaws.

If one follows the nature of things without separating or dividing, no flaws will reach one's door.

A good reckoner uses no counters.

That means following the course of things without depending on forms.

A well-shut door needs no bolts, and yet it cannot be opened.

A well-tied knot needs no rope, and yet none can untie it.

If one follows the natural state of things without establishing or exerting anything, then there is no need for bolts or ropes and yet no one can open or untie it. All these five speak of following the nature of things without creating or exerting and without restricting things by forms.[1]

Therefore the sage is always good in saving men and consequently no man is rejected.

The sage does not institute forms and names to restrain things. He does not formulate standards of advance so that the degenerate will

be discarded. Instead, he assists all things in their natural state but does not play the part of their origin.[2] This is why it is said that the sage never discards anyone. "Do not exalt the worthy, so that the people shall not compete. Do not value rare treasures, so that the people shall not steal. Do not display objects of desire, so that the people's hearts shall not be disturbed."[3] If people are always enabled to free their minds from doubts and desires, they will not be discarded.[4] Consequently, no man is rejected.

He is always good in saying things and consequently nothing is rejected.

This is called following[5] the light (of Nature).

Therefore the good man is the teacher of the bad.

(The sage) chooses the good to teach the bad.

Therefore he is said to be a teacher.

And the bad is the material from which the good may learn.

Tzu[a] (material) means to choose or to take.

The good man saves the bad with the good and also discards the bad with the good.

Therefore the bad ones are chosen by the good ones.[6]

He who does not value the teacher.

Or greatly care for the material,

Is greatly deluded although he may be learned.

Although one has knowledge, if he relies on

it but does not follow things with Tao, he certainly will be lost. Therefore it is said, "He is greatly deluded although he may be learned."

Such is the essential mystery.

NOTES

1. Compare similar statements in Wang Pi, chapter 36.

2. Paraphrasing Lao Tzu, chapter 64.

3. Lao Tzu, chapter 3.

4. Paraphrasing Lao Tzu, chapter 3. The translation of this extensive paragraph has been adapted from Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, p. 322.

5. Chan's note (p. 148, note 3): The word hsi[b], here rendered as "following," is open to various interpretations: "To cover, "to penetrate," "to practice," "to secure by devious means," "double," and so forth. According to Ma Hsü-lun's commentary on chapter 52, this hsi and the hsi[c] meaning "practice" were interchangeable in ancient times, but it is most often understood as "following."

6. Read ch'i[d] (to equalize) as chi[e] (to save). In any case, Wang Pi departs from the original meaning of tzu as material in the Lao Tzu and interpreted it to mean to take.

CHAPTER 28

He who knows the male and keeps to the female
Becomes the ravine of the world.
Being the ravine of the world,
He will never depart from eternal virtue,
But return to the state of infancy.

The male belongs to the first, the female belongs to afterward. Knowing that if we want to be the first in the world, we will certainly have to be the last. "Therefore the sage places himself in the background but finds himself in the foreground."[1] The ravine does not seek for things and yet things return to it of themselves. An infant uses no knowledge but harmonizes with the knowledge of Tzu-jan.

He who knows the white and yet keeps to the black
Becomes the model of the world.

Model means to be the standard or pattern.
Being the model for the world,
He will never deviate from eternal virtue.

To deviate means to be mistaken.
But returns to the state of the Ultimate of Nonbeing.

This means to be inexhaustible.
He who knows glory but keeps to humanity
Becomes the valley of the world.
Being the valley of the world,
He will be proficient in eternal virtue,

And returns to the state of simplicity (uncarved wood).

These three[2] means always to return. Only when that is done can virtue be complete wherever one may be. In a later chapter it is said, "Reversion is the action of Tao."[3] Success cannot be seized, for one always remains with the Mother.

When the uncarved wood is broken up, it is turned into concrete things.[4]

But when the sage uses it, he becomes the leading official.

Uncarved wood means essence. When essence is scattered, its different dispositions produce multiplicity, and species come into being as concrete things. Because they are scattered, the sage institutes rules for them, let good be their teacher and evil be their material[5] [as object lessons], changes their way of life, and transforms their customs so they will return to the One.[6]

Therefore the great ruler does not cut up.

He who rules greatly takes the art of the world as his own. Therefore he does not cut up.

NOTES

1. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 7.

2. Returning to the state of infancy. Ultimate of Nonbeing, and simplicity, according to Den Shiryū.

3. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 40.

4. Chan's note (p. 150, note 3): As Tao is transformed into the myriad things. The word ch'i[a], translated as "utensils" in chapter 11, should be understood here in its more general sense of concrete things. In later philosophy, especially in Neo-Confucianism, ch'i is contrasted with Tao, which has neither physical restriction nor physical form, but its meaning is not as general as matter, substance, or material entity.

5. Paraphrasing Wang Pi, chapter 27.

6. Translation of this paragraph is by Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, p. 322.

CHAPTER 29

When one desires to take over the empire and act
on it (interfere with it),
I see that he will not succeed.
The empire is a spiritual thing, and should not
be acted on.
Spirit has no physical form and has no spatial restriction, whereas concrete things (ch'i[a]) are produced through an integration of elements. When there is an integration without form, it is therefore called a spiritual thing.[1]
He who acts on it harms it.
He who holds on to it loses it.
The nature of the myriad things in spontaneity. It should be followed but not interfered with.[2] One can penetrate this nature, but one cannot rigidly hold on to it. Things have an eternal nature, and if we artificially interfere with it, we shall surely fail. Things come into and go out of being, and if we would hold on to them, we certainly lose them.
Among creatures some lead and some follow.
Some blow hot and some blow cold.
Some are strong and some are weak.
Some may break and some may fall.
Therefore the sage discards the extremes, the extravagant, and the excessive.
All these examples show that all things and

all affairs, whether in their favorable or unfavorable circumstances, and whether in their forward or backward movements, are not to be interfered with through action or held onto. The sage understands the nature of Tzu-jan[3] perfectly and knows clearly the conditions of all things. Therefore he goes along with them but takes no unnatural action. He is in harmony with them but does not impose anything on them. He removes their delusions and eliminates their doubts. Hence the people's minds are not confused and things are contented with their own nature.[4]

NOTES

1. Translation of this paragraph is by Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, p. 322.
2. The translation of this sentence is taken from Chan, ibid.
3. According to T'ao Hung-ch'ing, the word Chih[b] (to arrive) should be hsing[c] (nature). He is correct because it agrees with the earlier sentence, "The nature of the myriad things spontaneity." We may add that "nature" also parallels Ch'ing[d] (conditions) in the clause that immediately follows here.
4. Translation beginning with "The sage understands" is by Chan, ibid.

CHAPTER 30

He who assists the ruler with Tao does not dominate the world with force.

Even one who assists the ruler with Tao may not dominate the empire with force of arms.

How much less may the ruler who practices Tao!

The use of force usually brings requital.

A ruler[1] insists on piling up accomplishments and starting activities, but he who practices Tao devotes himself entirely to returning (to the root) and taking no action. Therefore it is said that a thing naturally brings a return.

Wherever armies are stationed, briers and thorns grow.

Great wars are always followed by famines.

This means that an army portends evil and injury.

If there is nothing which helps, there will certainly be injury to others in plundering and wounding people and destroying the fields.

Therefore it is said, "Briers and thorns grow."

A good (general)[2] achieves his purpose and stops,

But dares not seek to dominate the world.

To achieve purposes means to help. This is to say that he who knows how to employ an army aims only at saving people from disaster, and that is all. His purpose is not to dominate the world by force of arms.

He achieves his purpose but does not bring about it.

He achieves his purpose but does not boast about it.

He achieves his purpose but is not proud of it.

I do not consider the Tao of the army as something to be honored, but if I have no choice but to use it, what is there to brag about or to be proud of?

He achieves his purpose but only as an unavoidable step.

He achieves his purpose but does not aim to dominate.

This is to say that if he uses force, although he aims at success and his objective is to save people from disaster, yet only in times when this is an unavoidable step that one should employ it to abolish terror and disorder but should not aim at domination.

(For) after things reach their prime, they begin to grow old,

Which means being contrary to Tao.

Whatever is contrary to Tao will soon perish.

Reaching the prime state means a sudden rise in military power. It illustrates those who dominate the world by force. "A whirlwind does not last a whole morning. Nor does a rainstorm last a whole day."[3] Therefore a sudden rise is contrary to Tao and will soon perish.

NOTES

1. In the Tao-te chen-ching chi-chu, shih[a] (beginning) is chih[b] (to rule).

2. Chan's note (p. 152, note 2): The che[c] (person, he who) in the Ho-shang Kung and fifty-three other texts makes better sense than the yu[d] (to have) in the Wang Pi text.

3. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 23.

CHAPTER 31

Fine weapons are instruments of evil.
They are hated by men.
Therefore those who possess Tao turn away from them.
The good ruler when at home honors the left.
When at war he honors the right.
Weapons are instruments of evil, not the instruments of a good ruler.
When he uses them unavoidably, he regards calm restraint as the best principle.
Even when he is victorious, he does not regard it as praiseworthy,
For to praise victory is to delight in the slaughter of men.
He who delights in the slaughter of men will not succeed in the empire.
In auspicious affairs, the left is honored.
In inauspicious affairs, the right is honored.
The lieutenant general stands on the left.
The senior general stands on the right.
This is to say that the arrangement follows that of funeral ceremonies.[1]
For a slaughter of the multitude, let us weep with sorrow and grief.
For a victory, let us observe the occasion with the funeral ceremonies.

[The present Wang Pi commentary contains no comments on this chapter and chapter 66.][2]

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 155, note 6): Most commentators agree that these last twelve lines, if not the entire chapter, are a mixture of commentary and text. The sixth line, particularly, sounds like a commentary on the first line. These last five sentences interrupt the preceding and following passages. They contain the terms "lieutenant general" and "senior general", which did not appear until Han times (B.C. 206-220 A.D.). Moreover, this chapter and chapter 66 are the only two in the present Wang Pi text which contain no comments. These five sentences may possibly have been his commentary, although his commentaries in other chapters are more philosophical and more plentiful. But both Tung Ssu-ching and Chao Ping-wen say Wang added a note to this chapter, saying, "I suspect it was not written by Lao Tzu." This note is not found in the present text but still appears in a manuscript (A.D. 1235) in Japan. Kanō Naoki saw this note in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, in a fragment discovered in a Tun-huang[a] cave. See his Chūgoku tetsugaku shi (History of Chinese philosophy), p. 181. It may be an explanation of Wang's failure to comment on this chapter.

2. In the Tao-te chen-ching chi-chu, Wang Pi is quoted as saying, "I suspect that this was not written by Lao Tzu." See Hatano, II, pp. 59-62,

for a full discussion on this matter. Liu Kuo-chün has noted that the notation attributed to Wang Pi does not appear in the Taoist Canon edition of his commentary but argues that Wang Pi must have seen Lao Tzu 31 and did not believe it was by Lao Tzu.

CHAPTER 32

Tao is eternal and has no name.

Though its simplicity seems insignificant, none in the world can master it.

If kings and barons would hold on to it, all things would submit to them spontaneously.

Tao has neither form nor restriction (attachment).[1] Being eternal, it cannot be named. Its eternity consists in namelessness. We can never name it. That it is nameless gives it permanence. Therefore it is said, "Tao is eternal and has no name." That which is called simplicity, its heart (essence) is nothingness, and it also has no name. Therefore to reach Tao, there is nothing better than maintaining simplicity. He who is wise can serve with ability. He who is courageous can perform duties with bravery. He who is skillful can handle affairs. He who is strong can assume heavy responsibility. That which is known as simplicity is at ease and is not partial. It is almost like having nothing. Therefore it is said, "None in the world can master it." If someone embraces simplicity and takes no action, does not impede his true nature with material things, and does not harm his spirit with desires, things will submit to him spontaneously and Tao can be attained of itself.

Heaven and earth unite to drip sweet dew.

Without the command of men, it drips evenly over all.

This means that if heaven and earth unite, then sweet dew will fall of itself without being sought. If I adhere to its true nature and take no action, then without my command, people will naturally become well adjusted.

As soon as there were regulations and institutions, there were names.

As soon as there are names, know that it is time to stop.

It is by knowing when to stop that one can be free from danger.

"As soon as there were regulations and institutions" means that simplicity has disappeared.[2] It is the time when officials were first appointed. When there are institutions and officials, there must be ranks and titles to determine the upper and lower grades. Therefore "As there were regulations and institutions, there are names." From then on, any dispute will be concerned with small details. Therefore it is said, "As soon as there are names, know that it is time to stop." When thereafter everything is docketed, one loses the mother of government. Therefore, "It is by knowing when to stop that one can be free from danger." Analogically, Tao in the world may be compared to rivers and streams running into the sea.

When rivers and streams seek the sea, it is not the sea which calls for them. Without being called or asked, they return naturally. As Tao operates in the world, it is naturally even without anyone commanding it, and it is achieved without seeking. Therefore it is said, "Tao may be compared to rivers and streams running into the sea."

NOTES

1. For these descriptions, see Wang Pi, chapter 21.

2. The expression p'u-san[a] (simplicity disappears) also appears in Lao Tzu, chapter 28: "When the uncarved wood (simplicity) is broken up...."

CHAPTER 33

He who knows others is wise;
He who knows himself is enlightened.

He who knows others is merely wise. It is not as good as knowing oneself, which surpasses wisdom.

He who conquers others has physical strength.
He who conquers himself is strong.

He who conquers others merely has physical strength. It is not as good as he who conquers himself; nothing can impair his strength. To apply one's knowledge to others is not as good as to apply this knowledge to oneself. Applying one's strength to others is not as good as applying it to oneself. If one applies such knowledge to oneself, then things cannot hide from him. If one applies this strength to oneself, then things cannot attack him.[1]

He who is contented is rich.

He who is contented naturally will not lose. Therefore he is rich.

He who acts with vigor has will.

He who pursues his purpose diligently will certainly attain his goal. Therefore it is said, "He who acts with vigor has will."

He who does not lose his place (with Tao) will endure.

If one examines oneself intelligently, acts in accordance with one's own capacity,

and does not lose one's place (with Tao),
one will certainly endure.

He who dies but does not really perish enjoys long life.

Though one dies, the Tao of life does not perish, and one completes one's long life. The body perishes but Tao still remains. All the more if the body persists and Tao will not perish.

NOTE

1. According to Hattori Nankaku, kai[a] (to change) should read kung[b] (to attack). See Hatano, II, p. 74. Yen Ling-feng agrees.

CHAPTER 34

The Great Tao flows everywhere.
It may go left or right.

This means that Tao overflows and goes everywhere. It can be on the right or on the left, above or below. It operates all around.

Therefore there is no place where it does not reach.

All things depend on it for life, and it does not turn away from them.
It accomplishes its task, but does not claim credit for it.
It clothes and feeds all things but does not claim to be master over them.
Always without desires, it may be called The Small.

The myriad things all come from Tao. When they are born, they know not whence they come. Therefore if in the world one remains without desires, then each of the myriad things comes to the right place. If Tao does not act, then we call it The Small.

All things come to it and it does not master them; it may be called The Great.

The myriad things all return to Tao in order to live and[1] [Tao] causes the myriad things to ignore their source. From this point of view, it is not The Small. Therefore we also may call it The Great.

Therefore (the sage) never strives himself for the great, and thereby the great is achieved.

"Prepare for the difficult while it is easy. Deal with the big while it is still small."[2]

NOTES

1. Scholars like Tsukada Taihō and Yen Ling-feng agree that the word li[a] (strength) here is superfluous.

2. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 63.

CHAPTER 35

Hold fast to that great form (Tao),
And all the world will come.

The great form is the mother of the heavenly images. It is neither hot[1] nor cold, neither warm nor cool. Therefore it can embrace the myriad things and there is nothing which it would harm. If the master holds to this, then all the world will come.

They come and will encounter no harm;
But enjoy comfort, peace, and health.

Without form, without knowledge, without partiality, without being evident,[2] therefore the myriad things come to it and encounter no harm.

When there are music and dainties,
Passing strangers will stay.
But the words uttered by Tao,
How insipid and tasteless!
We look at it; it is imperceptible.
We listen to it; it is inaudible.
We use it; it is inexhaustible.

These words describe the depth and the greatness of Tao. A human being hears the words of Tao, but they are not like music or dainties. The human heart corresponds to the times and feels happy. Joy and dainties can induce "passing strangers to stay, but the words uttered by Tao,

how insipid and tasteless!" If we look at it, it is imperceptible and not enough to delight the eyes. If we listen to it, it is inaudible and not enough to rejoice the ears. It is as if Tao had no objective. But if we use it, it can never be exhausted.

NOTES

1. Add pu-yen[a] (not hot) here, according to Yen Ling-feng. T'ao Hung-ch'ing had suggested that pu-yen be added at the end, in this order: cold - warm - hot - cool. The order seems logical because cold-warm and hot-cool are parallel. However, Yen's order, hot-cold warm-cool, is also parallel. Besides, Yen has the support of Wang Pi's other writings where the sequence of warm-cool and hot-cold are used. In Wang Pi, chapter 41, the sequence is warm-hot, hot-cold.

2. The same phrase appears in Wang Pi, chapter 16.

CHAPTER 36

In order to contract,
It is necessary first to expand.
In order to weaken,
It is necessary first to strengthen.
In order to destroy,
It is necessary first to promote.
In order to grasp,
It is necessary first to give.
This is called subtle light.

If one wishes to remove violent and fierce[1] people, in the case of these four things, one should follow the nature of things and let them destroy themselves. One should not trust punishment as great in order to remove things.[2] Therefore it is called subtle light. If one lets them expand sufficiently and one even further expands them, then everything will contract. If one helps those who have not sufficiently expanded and then demand them to expand further and further, one will instead encounter danger oneself.[3]

The weak and the tender overcome the hard and the strong.
Fish should not be taken away from water.
And sharp weapons of the state should not be displayed to the people.

Sharp weapons mean implements, which are of

benefit[4] to the country. Only by following the nature of things, without resorting to punishment,[5] can things be managed. But if by the imperceptible implement everything finds its own place, then that is the sharp weapon for the state. He who demonstrates this to others relies on punishment. If one relies on punishment to benefit a country, that will be a mistake. If a fish is removed from the depths, it will certainly be shown to be a mistake. If to benefit a state one institutes punishment in order to demonstrate to the people, that will be a mistake too.

NOTES

1. Compare Lao Tzu, chapter 42: "Violent and fierce people do not die a natural death."

2. The text here is corrupted but the sense is clear.

3. The text here is obscure.

4. Li[a] means both sharp and benefit.

5. Compare a similar statement in Wang Pi, chapters 23, 41.

CHAPTER 37

Tao invariably takes no action,
  This means to follow Nature.[1]
and yet there is nothing left undone.
  The myriad things follow it to begin[2] and complete its being.
If kings and barons can keep it, all things will transform spontaneously.
If, after transformation, they should desire to be active,
I would restrain them with simplicity, which has no name.
  "If after transformation they should desire to be active" means that the desire to be active is realized. "I would restrain them with simplicity, which has no name" means that I will not be their master.
Simplicity, which has no name, is free of desires.
  This means that there is no desire to complete.[3]
Being free of desires, it is tranquil.
And the world will be at peace of its own accord.

NOTES

1. Compare a similar statement in Wang Pi, chapter 25.

2. Read chih[a] (to rule) as shih[b] (to begin), according to a number of writers. See Hatano, II, p. 92, T'ao Hung-ch'ing, and Yen Ling-feng.

3. Wang Pi's sentence is probably incomplete.

CHAPTER 38

The man of superior virtue is not (conscious of)
his virtue,
And in this way he really possesses virtue.
The man of inferior virtue never loses (sight of)
his virtue,
And in this way he loses his virtue.
The man of superior virtue takes no action, but
has no ulterior motive to do so.
The man of inferior virtue takes action, and has an
ulterior motive to do so.
The man of superior humanity takes action, but has
no ulterior motive to do so.
The man of superior righteousness takes action,
and has an ulterior motive to do so.
The man of superior propriety[1] takes action,
And when people do not respond to it, he will
stretch his arms and force it on them.
Therefore when Tao is lost, only then does the
doctrine of virtue arise.
When virtue is lost, only then does the doctrine of
humanity arise.
When humanity is lost, only then does the doctrine
of righteousness arise.
When righteousness is lost, only then does the
doctrine of propriety arise.
Now, propriety is a superficial expression of
loyalty and faithfulness, and the beginning

of disorder.
Those who are the first to know have the flowers of
Tao but are the beginning of ignorance.
For this reason the great man dwells in the thick,
and does not rest with the thin.
He dwells in the fruit, and does not rest with the
flower.
Therefore he rejects the one, and accepts the other.

Te[a] (virtue) means te[b] (to attain). It is constant attainment without loss and benefit without harm. Therefore we call it te. How is virtue to be attained? It is to be attained through Tao. How is virtue to be completely fulfilled? It is through nonbeing as its function. As nonbeing is its function, all things will be embraced. Therefore in regard to things, if they are understood as nonbeing, all things will be in order, whereas if they are understood as being, it is impossible to avoid the fact that they are products (phenomena). Although Heaven and Earth are extensive, nonbeing is the mind, and although sages and kings are great, vacuity is their foundation. Therefore it is said that if we see things by their return,[2] the mind of Heaven and Earth will be revealed.[3] If one thinks of the solstice, then one sees the ultimate of former kings.[4] Therefore if one destroys oneself and one's ego, then all people within the four seas will respect

him and will come to him from far and near.

If one considers oneself to be something special and sets one's heart on something, then one's body cannot be preserved, and one's muscles and bones cannot tolerate each other.

Therefore the man of superior virtue makes use only of Tao. He will not consider his virtue as a virtue. He will not hold on to anything or use anything. Therefore he has virtue and can accomplish anything. He does not strive but accomplishes everything.[5] Therefore although he does indeed have virtue, he does not possess the nature of virtue.

The man of inferior virtue strives and achieves; he acts and accomplishes. Thus he must establish the good in order to be able to manage things. Therefore he has the name of virtue. If one strives for success, one will certainly lose sometimes. If one acts to perfect things, one will certainly fail sometimes. Where the name of good arises, there will be evil to correspond to it. Therefore "A man of inferior virtue takes action and has an ulterior motive to do so or acts intentionally." Not to act for ulterior motives means not to act onesidedly. All those who cannot refrain from action but must act are of inferior virtue. Humanity, righteousness, ceremonies, and regulations are such.

To make clear whether virtue is superior or inferior one always contrasts superior virtue with inferior virtue until the point of having no ulterior motive is reached. The ultimate capacity of inferior virtue is superior humanity. When superior humanity develops to the point where there are no ulterior motives and yet one still acts and yet acts in such a way as to have no ulterior motives, one thus has the trouble of doing something. The roots lie in taking no action and the Mother is the unnamed. If by abandoning the roots and discarding the Mother one goes to the son (the nonessential), then although one's accomplishment is great, certainly there will be failure, and although one's name is beautiful, falsehood will certainly arise. If one cannot accomplish without action and manage without stirring up things and goes on to act, one will love people with extensive and universal benevolence and love without partiality or selfishness. Such is therefore the case where "Superior humanity takes action but has no ulterior motive to do so."

When love cannot be universal, there will be those who resist that which is correct and upright.[6] Those who apply righteousness to straighten out matters will rage against injustice and protect uprightness, or help this and attack that. Thus things will be done

with intent. Therefore "Superior righteousness takes action but has an ulterior motive to do so."

If justice is not earnest, then there are superficial embellishments. Those who pay homage to and revere such embellishments will like to cultivate reverence. They will be exacting and demanding in dealing with others. Whenever there is anything wrong, they will get angry. Therefore, "The man of superior propriety takes action, and when people do not respond to it, he will stretch his arms and force it on them."

Tao is indeed the ultimate of greatness. Anything beyond it is not worth honoring. Although [Heaven and Earth] are engaged in great understandings and have great wealth[7] in possessing the myriad things, each thing still has its own character. Although it is valuable to have nonbeing as its function, nevertheless there cannot be substance without nonbeing.[8] If there cannot be substance without nonbeing, then what makes it great is lost. This is why it is said, "When Tao is lost, only then does the doctrine of virtue arise."

If one takes nonbeing as function, one obtains the Mother, and therefore one does not labor hard and all things are in order. Beyond this, one will lose the Mother of function. If one

cannot refrain from action, one will highly honor universal benevolence. If one cannot practice universal benevolence, one will highly honor correctness and uprightness. If one cannot pursue correctness and uprightness, one will highly honor embellishments and reverence. That is why it is said, "When virtue is lost, only then does the doctrine of humanity arise. When humanity is lost, only then does the doctrine of righteousness arise. When righteousness is lost, only then does the doctrine of propriety arise."

Now propriety arises first of all from superficial loyalty and faithfulness and lack of openness,[9] the stress on appearance, and the struggle to control trivialities. Righteousness and propriety issue from within, but if one practices them, they are still artificial. How long can they last if one engages in external decorum? Therefore "Propriety[10] is a superficial expression of loyalty and faithfulness and is the beginning of disorder."

Those who are first to know are those who try to know before others do. They belong to the group of inferior virtue. They exhaust their intelligence in order to know first and apply their intellectual power to operate various things. Although their hearts are genuine, they are treacherous and clever and all the more

subtle. Although their praise is ample, all the more their earnestness is lost. They labor, but their work becomes obscure, and they work, but their management is spoiled. Though they exhaust their wisdom, yet people are still more harmed.

If one abandons oneself and leaves things alone,[11] then without taking action, there will be peace. If one keeps to simplicity, then one does not follow tradition an institutions. One acquiesces in what this person receives but rejects what that person holds onto. "Those who are the first[12] to know have the flowers of Tao but are the beginning of ignorance." Therefore if one obtains the Mother of how to make effort, then "All things arise, and he does not turn away from them,"[13] and all things are supported and preserved and not troubled. When one functions without physical form and commands without name, humanity and righteousness will be manifest and propriety and reverence will become prominent.

When things are supported by the great Tao and guarded by the nameless, then things are not glorified and the mind does not calculate. If everyone realizes his reality (truth) and all things are done with sincerity, then human virtue is rich, the principle of conduct is correct, and propriety and reverence become pure.

If one rejected what is supported and discards what is produced, if people make use of their completed form and employ their intelligence like a slave, then humanity becomes falsehood,[14] righteousness becomes competition, and propriety becomes struggle. Therefore the richness of the virtue of humanity cannot be (obtained) through utilizing humanity, the correctness of the principle of conduct cannot be realized by utilizing righteousness, and the purity of propriety and reverence cannot be accomplished by utilizing ceremony.

Support things with Tao, and command and unite them with the Mother. Therefore one should manifest them without glorifying them, and make them prominent without any ambition. One uses the nameless and the name is thereby real. One uses the formless and the form is thereby completed. When one holds on to the Mother to preserve the son, and honors the roots in order to promote the branches, there will be both physical form and name and evil will not arise. The great beauty will match Heaven and flowers will not grow. Therefore the Mother should not be discarded and the roots should not be lost. Humanity and righteousness are produced by the Mother, but they cannot be the Mother. Forms and things were made by artisans, but they cannot be artisans. If one discards one's Mother

and uses her son, and if one discards the roots and goes towards the branches, then names will bring on division and things and shape will impose a limit. Although the greatness is of the highest degree, there will surely be something not included, and although the praise is very extensive, there will surely be trouble. If the effort is to take action, is that something one should abide in?

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 169, note 3): In a narrow sense, li[c] (propriety) means rites, ritual, ceremonies, etc., but in a broad sense it means rules of behavior or principles of conduct.

2. Referring to Lao Tzu, chapter 16.

3. The passage beginning with "how is virtue" up to this point has been adapted from Chan, Source Book, p. 322.

4. Wang Pi is here paraphrasing the Book of Changes, hexagram no. 24, Fu[d] (to return). Mou Tsung-san, in his Ts'ai-hsing yü hsüan-li (Capacity, nature, and metaphysic), p. 165, suggests amending chih[e] (ultimate) with chih[f] (intention), making the sentence to read, "We can see the intentions of former kings." However, in the Book of Changes, solstice refers to the ultimate point where the process of returning starts.

5. Compare Lao Tzu, ch. 47.

6. The Tao-te chen-ching chi-chu and other texts have chih[g] (upright) instead of chen[h] (true). See Yen Ling-feng.

7. Paraphrasing the Book of Changes, "Appended Remarks," Part I, chapter 5. Following this sentence, some editions have the following, which makes no sense: And cannot achieve self-completion. Therefore heaven cannot carry, earth cannot cover, and man cannot support.

8. The translation of this paragraph up to this point has been taken from Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, p. 323. Mou Tsung-san (p. 166) thinks that she[i] (to discard), here translated as "without," should read chü[j] (to dwell in), meaning, "One should not dwell in or hold on to non being as substance," Ch'ien Mu, however, interprets the sentence to mean that non being as function should be discarded, for non being is substance. See his Chung-kuo ssu-hsiang shih (History of Chinese thought), p. 94.

9. In the Tao-te chen-ching chi-chu, yang[k] (bright) reads ch'ang[l] (clear and free).

10. Liu Kuo-chün has observed that the Taoist Canon edition has shih-li[m] (loss of propriety) instead of fu li[n] (now, propriety) and remarks that if this is correct and if Wang Pi had followed the Lao Tzu text, it would mean that Lao Tzu was defending

propriety rather than attacking it. Liu concedes, however, that there is not enough evidence to support this contention.

11. See a similar statement in Wang Pi, chapter 5.

12. According to Tōjō Ichitō, Hattori Nankaku, et al., agree that the word ch'ien[o] (first) should be added here. See Hatano, II, p. 115.

13. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 2.

14. Hattori Nankaku, Usami Shinsui, Tsukada Taihō, Tōjō Ichitō, et al., all read ch'eng[p] (sincerity) as wei[q] (insincerity, false). See Hatano, II, pp. 116-117.

CHAPTER 39

Of old those that obtained the One:

"Of old" means in the beginning. One is the beginning of number and the ultimate of things. All things are produced by the One and this is why it is the master of all. And all things achieve their completion because of the One.[1] However, as soon as completed, they leave this One[2] to hold on to their completion. In thus holding on to their completion, they lose their Mother. Therefore they crack, they are shaken, they wither away, become exhausted, become extinct, and fall.

Heaven obtained the One and became clear.
Earth obtained the One and became tranquil.
The spiritual beings obtained the One and became divine.
The valley obtained the One and became full.
The myriad things obtained the One and lived and grew.
Kings and barons obtained the One and became rulers of the empire.
What made them so is the One.[3]

Through this One, each of these becomes clear, tranquil, divine, full, growing, and rulers.

If heaven had not thus become clear,
It would soon crack.

With the One, it achieves clearness, but it achieves clearness not by clearness. If it

adheres to the One, then clearness will not be lost. If it uses clearness, it will probably crack. Therefore the Mother of the results cannot be discarded. For this reason, heaven, and so on, would not use their results, fearing thereby to lose their roots.

If the earth had not thus become tranquil,
It would soon be shaken.
If the spiritual beings had not thus become divine,
They would soon wither away.
If the valley had not thus become full,
It would soon become exhausted.
If the myriad things had not thus lived and grown,
They would soon become extinct.
If kings and barons had not thus become honorable and high in position,
They would soon fall.
Therefore humble station is the basis of honor.
The low is the foundation of the high.
For this reason kings and barons call themselves children without parents, lonely people without spouses, and men without food to eat.
Is this not regarding humble station as the basis of honor?
Is it not?
Therefore enumerate all the parts of a chariot as you may, and you still have no chariot.[4]
Rather than jingle like the jade,
Rumble like the rocks.

Clearness cannot create clearness, and fullness cannot create fullness. Everything has its Mother so as to preserve its form (shape). Therefore clearness is not greatly honored and fullness is not highly valued. What is honorable lies with the Mother, and the Mother honors the formless. "Humble station is the basis of honor (and) the low is the foundation of the high....Therefore to attain fame repeatedly is no fame.[5] Jade and stones jingle and rumble. Their substance all lies in their form. Therefore one should not desire it.[6]

NOTES

1. The last three sentences have been translated by Chan, Source Book, p. 323.

2. The "one" here is added according to the Tao-te chen-ching chi-chu.

3. Chan's note (p. 171, note 2): Neither the Wang Pi nor the Ho Shang-kung text has the word "One," but the Fu I and twenty-four other texts have it, according to Chiang Hsi-ch'ang.

4. Chan's note (p. 171, note 5): The Wu Ch'eng text reads: "Therefore supreme praise is no praise."

5. Both the Lao Tzu text and the Wang Pi commentary read literally, "Therefore enumerate all the parts of a chariot as you may, and you still have no chariot." Some editions have chih[a] (supreme) instead of chih[b] (to attain) and many editions have yü[c] (fame) instead of yü[d] (chariot). Here to read yü as fame agrees better with the preceding sentences, as most writers have maintained. See Hatano, II, pp. 125-126.

6. Unlike other commentators like Ho-shang Kung, who interpreted jade as high and stone as low, with lowliness preferred, Wang Pi interpreted Lao Tzu's sentence as meaning that both jade and stone are undesirable.

CHAPTER 40

Reversion is the action of Tao.

"The low is the foundation of the high; humble station is the basis of honor."[1] Nonbeing is the function of being.[2] This is its reversion. However we act, if we know that there is nonbeing, all things will interpenetrate. Therefore it is said, "Reversion is the action of Tao."

Weakness is the function of Tao.

Weakness and gentleness interpenetrate and cannot be exhausted.

All things in the world come from being.

And being comes from nonbeing.

All things in the world came from being, and the origin of being is based on nonbeing. To have being in total, it is necessary to return to nonbeing.[3]

NOTES

1. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 39.
2. Compare Lao Tzu, chapter 11.
3. This translation is taken from Chan, Source Book, p. 323.

CHAPTER 41

When the highest type of men hear Tao,
They diligently practice it.

Because they have the will to do so.

When the average type of men hear Tao,
They half believe in it.
When the lowest type of men hear Tao,
They laugh heartily at it.
If they did not laugh at it, it would not be Tao.
Therefore there is the established saying:

To establish means to construct, to set up.

The Tao which is bright appears to be dark.

"The sage is bright as light but does not dazzle."[1]

The Tao which goes forward appears to fall backward.

"The sage places himself in the background, but finds himself in the foreground. He puts himself away, and yet he always remains."[2]

The Tao which is level appears uneven.

Being even means deep. The Tao of great levels follows the nature of things. It does not keep to its own evenness to divide things. Its evenness is not seen, but, on the contrary, it seems to be uneven.

Great virtue appears like a valley (hollow).

He will not consider his virtue as a virtue, for he does not think of it.

Great purity appears like disgrace.

"He who knows the white and yet keeps to the black."[3] Great purity will then be achieved.

Far-reaching virtue appears as if insufficient.

Far-reaching virtue is not filled; it is empty, without form, and cannot be filled.

Solid virtue appears as if unsteady.

Being unsteady means to be a companion.[4] He who establishes virtue leaves things in their natural state, neither establishes nor bestows, and therefore seems to be a companion.[5]

True substance appears to be changeable.

He whose substance is true (genuine) is not proud of its genuineness (authenticity). Therefore it is changeable.

The great square has no corners.

"(The sage) is as pointed as a square but does not pierce."[6] Therefore it has no corners.

The great implement (or talent) is slow to finish (or mature).

The great implement finishes (completes) the world without holding on to the whole or its parts. Therefore it must be slow to finish.

Great music sounds faint.

"We listen to it and do not hear it; its name is The Inaudible."[7] That means that (great) music cannot be heard. Where there is sound, there are parts or lots. If there are parts or lots, then there would not be the note of *kung*[a] (the fundamental note) but the note of *shang*[b]

(secondary note). If one begins to distinguish or to divide, one cannot control the whole. Therefore that which has sound is not great music.

Great form has no shape.

If there is shape, then there are parts or lots. Where there parts or lots, if it is not warm, then it is hot, and if it is not hot, then it is cold. Therefore if a form has shape, it is not the great form.

Tao is hidden and nameless.

Yet it is Tao alone that skillfully provides for all and brings them to perfection.

In general, all skillfulness is perfected through Tao. In regard to forms, it is great form, but the great form has no shape. In regard to music, it is great music, but great music sounds faint. Things are accomplished by Tao, but one does not see their complete shape.[8] Therefore it is hidden and without name. To provide for others is not only to supply them with what they need. Once one provides others (with the One), it will be sufficient to complete their virtue forever. Therefore it is said to skillfully provide. To bring things to completion, not in the way the artisan cuts his object, but to enable all things to attain their shape, is therefore said to be skillful in perfecting.

NOTES

1. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 58.
2. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 7.
3. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 28.
4. The meaning here is very obscure.
5. None of the commentators has found a satisfactory emendation or a satisfactory interpretation.
6. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 58.
7. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 14.
8. A similar sentence appears in Wang Pi, chapter 6.

CHAPTER 42

Tao produced the One.
The One produced the two.
The two produced the three.
And the three produced the ten thousand things.
The ten thousand things carry the yin and embrace the yang, and through the blending of the material force[1] they achieve harmony.
People hate to be children without parents, lonely people without spouses, or men without food to eat.
And yet kings and lords call themselves by these names.
Therefore it is often the case that things gain by losing and lose by gaining.
The ten thousand things have ten thousand different forms, but in the final analysis they are one. How did they become one? Because of nonbeing.[2] Through nonbeing, one reaches oneness. This One may be called nonbeing. Since it is already called One, how can there be no speech? If there is speech and there is the One, is that not two? If there is One, there are two, and consequently three is produced. From nonbeing to being, numbers come to an end here. Beyond this, it does not belong to the current (way) of Tao.[3] Therefore in the production of the myriad things, I know its master. Although things exist

in ten thousand different forms, their material forces are blended as one. The multitude have their own minds, and different countries have different customs. But if the one is attained, there will be kings and dukes as their masters. One is the master. How can it be abandoned?
The greater the number, the further we go astray. We are nearer to [truth] if the number is reduced. When it is reduced to the least (one), we shall arrive at the ultimate.[4] Even when one has spoken of One, one will still arrive at three. All the more if basically there is no One, how then could one draw near to Tao? One increases by diminishing. That is certainly not empty speech.
What others have taught, I teach also:
I do not compel others to follow, but I follow Nature and place ultimate principle in the forefront. If we follow it, there will be fortune, and if we disobey it, there will be misfortune.[5] Therefore if people teach each other to contravene this, they will surely meet with misfortune. This is the same as what I teach others not to oppose it.
"Violent and fierce people do not die a natural death."[6]
I shall make this the father[7] of my teaching.
"Violent and fierce people do not die a natural death." When people teach each other to behave

violently, they do not[8] resemble my teaching that they should not be violent. To point out that violent and fierce people do not die a natural death is almost like saying that my teaching will bring good fortune. Therefore if we find people violating this teaching, they can conveniently be made the father.

NOTES

1. Ch'i[a], material force, vital force, matter-energy.

2. The translation of these two sentences is taken from Chan, Source Book, p. 323.

3. Paraphrasing Chuang Tzu, chapter 2 (1:35a).

4. The translation from "Therefore in the production" up to this point is taken from Chan, ibid.

5. The translation of this sentence is taken from Chan, ibid.

6. Chan's note (p. 177, note 1): The same saying appears in the inscription on a metal statue in the imperial ancestral temple that Confucius visited. The story and the inscription appear in the Shuo-yüan[b] (Collection of discourses, compiled by Liu Hsiang,[c] 77-6 B.C.), 10:16b-17a. Commentators say the Lao Tzu quotes from the inscription, but both may have quoted from a common source.

8. Read pi[d] (surely) as fei[e] (do not), according to Yen Ling-feng.

CHAPTER 43

The softest things in the world overcome the hardest things in the world.

Air passes through everything and water penetrates everywhere.[1]

Nonbeing penetrates that in which there is no space. Through this I know the advantage of taking no action.

The soft and empty nonbeing penetrates everything. Nonbeing is inexhaustible. The softest cannot be bent. Inferring from this, I therefore know the advantage of taking no action.

Few in world can understand the teaching without words and the advantage of taking no action.

NOTE

1. The phrase ch'u-yü[a] (comes out of), preceding "penetrates," is superfluous, according to some scholars. See Hatano, II, p. 143.

CHAPTER 44

Which does one love more, fame or one's own life?

He who honors his name and loves superiority will alienate himself from others.

Which is more valuable, one's own life or wealth?

He who is greedy for things and can never have enough will have little for himself.

Which is worse, gain or loss?

Which is worse, to attain great benefit or to lose oneself?

Therefore he who has lavish desires will spend extravagantly.

He who hoards most will lose heavily.

He who has lavish desires will not share with others. He who hoards most will not split with others. He who seeks much will be attacked by many and will be hated by others. Therefore he will incur great expenditure and will lose heavily.

He who is contented suffers no disgrace.

He who knows when to stop is free from danger.

Therefore he can long endure.

CHAPTER 45

What is most perfect seems to be incomplete;

But its utility is unimpaired.

It completes a thing wherever it may without resulting in a particular form. Therefore it seems to be incomplete.

What is most full seems to be empty;

But its usefulness is inexhaustible.

That which is most full is proficient.[1] It provides anything that comes along without any attachment. Therefore it seems to be empty.

What is most straight seems to be crooked.

Being straight with everything as it comes along, one's straightness is confined to oneself.[2] Therefore it seems to be crooked.

The greatest skill seems to be clumsy.

The greatest skill follows Tzu-jan so as to complete things and does not create strange or extraordinary cases. Therefore it seems to be clumsy.

The greatest eloquence seems to stutter.

The greatest eloquence follows things in speaking but he himself does not make things up. Therefore he seems to stutter.

Hasty movement overcomes cold,

(But) tranquility overcomes heat.

By being greatly tranquil,

One is qualified to be the ruler of the world.

Only when a hasty movement is complete can cold be overcome, but tranquility conquers heat by taking no action. If one infers from this principle, then "Being greatly tranquil, one is qualified to be the ruler of the world." By being tranquil, one preserves the genuineness of things while hasty movement violates their nature.[3] Therefore only by tranquility will the greatest things mentioned above be attained.

NOTES

1. Ch'ung[a] (empty) is to be taken as ch'ung[b] (proficient).

2. Read i[c] (one) as chi[d] (self), according to Hattori Nankaku and Yen Ling-feng.

3. See a similar statement in Wang Pi, chapter 60.

CHAPTER 46

When Tao prevails in the world, galloping horses are turned back to fertilize (the fields with their dung.)[1]

When Tao prevails, people know when to be contented and when to stop. Without seeking outside, each cultivates the internal only. Therefore galloping horses are turned back to fertilize the fields with their dung.

When Tao does not prevail in the world, war horses thrive in the suburbs.

When people are greedy and never have enough, everyone does not cultivate the internal but seeks the external. Therefore war horses thrive in the suburbs.

There is no calamity greater than lavish desires.[2]
There is no greater guilt than discontentment.
And there is no greater disaster than greed.
He who is contented with contentment is always contented.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 181, note 1): As quoted by Chu Hsi, the sentence has an additional word, "cart," thus meaning that the horses are used to draw manure carts (Chu Tzu yü-lei, 125:12a). But no one, not even his pupil who recorded the saying, knew on what textual authority he added the word. Probably Chu Hsi was paraphrasing, as many Chinese writers often do when they quote.

2. Chan's note (p. 181, note 4): This sentence does not appear in the Wang Pi text but appears in fifty-one other texts, including the Ho-shang Kung and Fu I texts.

CHAPTER 47

One may know the world without going out of doors.
One may see the Way of Heaven without looking
through the windows.
Events have a source and things have a master.[1]
There may be many roads but their destination
is the same, and there may be a hundred deli-
berations but the result is the same.[2] There
is a great constancy in Tao, and there is a
generality in principle. By holding on to the
Tao of old, we can master the present. Although
we live in the present age, we can know the
primeval beginning.[3] This is why one may know
[the world] without going out of doors or
looking through the windows.
The further one goes, the less one knows.
Nonbeing is inherent in the One. But when we
look for it in the multiplicity of things, it
is like Tao which can be looked for but not
seen, listened to but not heard, reached for
but not touched. If we know it, we do not need
to go out of doors. If we do not know it, the
further we go, the more beclouded we become.
Therefore the sage knows without going about,
Understands[4] without seeing,
If we know the general principle of things, we
can know through thinking even if we do not

travel. If we know the basis of things, even if we do not see them, we can understand the principle of right and wrong (which governs them).[5]

And accomplishes without any action.

If one understands the nature of things, one must follow it, and that is all.[6] Therefore, although no action is taken, things are accomplished.

NOTES

1. Compare Lao Tzu, chapter 70 and Wang Pi, chapter 49.

2. Paraphrasing the Book of Changes, "Appended Remarks," Part II, chapter 5.

3. Paraphrasing Lao Tzu, chapter 14.

4. Chan's note (p. 183, note 1): The word ming[a] ordinarily means "name," but is interchangeable with ming[b] meaning "to understand."

5. The translation of Wang Pi's commentary in this chapter so far is adapted from Chan, Source Book, pp. 323-324.

6. A similar expression is found in Wang Pi, chapter 27.

CHAPTER 48

The pursuit of learning is to increase day after day.

The task is to improve one's ability and increase one's learning.

The pursuit of Tao is to decrease day after day.

The task is to return to vacuity and nonbeing.

It is to decrease and further decrease until one reaches the point of taking no action.

No action is undertaken, and yet nothing is left undone.

If there is action, there will certainly be some loss. Therefore in nonaction, nothing remains undone.

An empire is often brought to order by having no activity.

In action, one always follows (Tao).[1]

If one (likes to) undertake activity,

That means that one does something oneself.

he is not qualified to govern the empire.

That means that one loses the controlling root.

NOTE

1. This remark also appears in Wang Pi, chapter 49.

CHAPTER 49

The sage has no fixed (personal) ideas.
He regards the people's ideas as his own.

In his action, he always follows (Tao).[1]
I treat those who are good with goodness,
And also treat those who are not good with goodness.

If each follows his functions, the good will not be lost.
Thus goodness is attained.

That means that no one is rejected.
I am honest to those who are honest,
And I am also honest to those who are not honest.
Thus honesty is attained.

The sage, in the government of his empire, has no subjective point of view.
His mind forms a harmonious whole with that of his people.
They all lend their eyes and ears.[2]
All exercise their ability to hear or to see.
And he treats them all as infants.

(The sage) enables all to be in harmony and without desire, like an infant. "Heaven and Earth have their fixed positions and the sages are able to carry out and complete their abilities. They consult with the people and spiritual beings and thus all people participate."[3] Those with ability will be accepted and those with talent will be taken in. Where

the ability is great, one will be great, and where the talent is honorable, one will be honored. Things have a source and events have a master.[4] In this way one may have the crown jewels cover his eyes without fearing cheated, and may have yellow fine floss-silk fill his ears without worrying about not being respected. Why then labor one's intelligence to investigate the feelings of the people?

If one investigates others with intelligence, then others will respond with their intelligence to compete with him. If one investigates others with distrust, others will respond with distrust to compete with him. The hearts of the people of the world are not necessarily the same. If they do not dare differ in their response, then none will act according to his own nature.[5] There is no greater harm than the use of intelligence. "If one relies on cunning, people will quarrel with him. If one relies on strength, people will struggle against him."[6] If one's cunning does not surpass others and stands on the ground of quarrels, one will become exhausted. If one's strength does not surpass others and stands on the ground of struggle, one will be in danger. No one has ever been able to tell others not to use the cunning and strength against him."[7] This being the case, one will be fighting alone against

others but others in thousands of tens of thousands will be fighting against him. If one increases laws and multiplies punishment, blocks people's roads and attacks their private homes, then the myriad things will lose their spontaneity and people will lose their hands and feet (ability to act). Birds above will be in disorder and fishes below will be confused. Therefore "the sage, in the government of his empire, has no subjective point of view and forms a harmonious whole with the world." That means that he does not set his mind for or against anything.[8] If he does not investigate, why will the people wish to escape? If he wants nothing, why must people comply with him? If people will neither avoid nor comply, then all will act according to their own nature. If people do not evade what they can do and try to do what they cannot, and do not evade what they are competent to do and try to do what they are not competent to do, then he who speaks will speak of what he knows, and he who acts will do what he can do. "They all lend their eyes and ears, and he treats them all as infants."

NOTES

1. This remark appears in Wang Pi, chapter 48, also. It is translated slightly differently here.

2. Chan's note (p. 187, note 4): The Wang Pi text does not have these words, but the Ho-shang Kung and Fu I texts do.

3. Book of Changes, "Appended Remarks," Part II, chapter 12.

4. Paraphrasing Lao Tzu, chapter 70.

5. Compare Analects, 13:14.

6. Quoting the Huai-nan Tzu, 14:8a

7. Paraphrasing ibid.

8. Compare Analects, 4:10.

CHAPTER 50

Man comes in to life and goes out to death.

This means to come out of the place of life and to enter into the place of death.

Three out of ten[1] are companions of life.

Three out of ten are companions of death.[2]

And three out of ten in their lives lead from activity to death.

And for what reason?

Because of man's intensive striving after life.

I have heard that one who is a good preserver of his life will not meet tigers or wild buffalos,

And in fighting will not try to escape from weapons of war.

The wild buffalo cannot butt its horns against him,

The tiger cannot fasten its claws in him,

And weapons of war cannot thrust their blades into him.

And for what reason?

Because in him there is no room for death.

Three out of ten means three points out of ten points. Let us take the way of life. Only three out of ten can preserve life to the utmost. Or take the way of death. Only three out of ten also will cling on to death to the utmost. If people seek after life too intensively, they will arrive at the point of no life. Those who are good perservers of their lives do not live for the sake of seeking after life.[3] Therefore

there is no room for death.

Weapons are the most destructive tools. Similarly, rhinoceros and tigers are the most dangerous animals. If one can prevent weapons of war thrusting their blasts into him and the tigers and wild buffalos from fastening their claws and horns, then one surely does not endanger his body with desires. Where would there be room for death?

Worms and serpents consider the abyss to be shallow and burrow a hole, the eagle and the sparrowhawk consider the mountain to be low and build their nests on top of it. Arrow and string cannot get to them, nor can the net reach them there. Therefore it can then be said that they dwell where there is no room for death. However, due to the delicious bait, they finally enter the place of death. Is that not striving too intensively for life? Therefore, if one is not detached from the root by seeking and does not change his genuineness with desires, then even though if he enters the army, he will not be wounded, and if he walks on land, he will not be attacked. Truly, the infant[4] should be our model and should be honored.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 188, note 1): Han Fei Tzu[a] (d. 233 B.C.) understood "ten-three" not as three out of ten but thirteen and identified the four limbs and the nine external cavities as factors that sustain life, lead to death, or lead through activity to death. See Han Fei Tzu, Ssu-pu pei-yao ed., chapter 20, 6:8a. Most commentators and Chinese writers prefer to follow Wang Pi, understanding "three-ten" to mean "three out of ten." Translators are about evenly divided.

2. Chan's note (p. 180, note 3): Some Chinese commentators have been highly imaginative in interpreting these enigmatic lines. Aside from Ho-shang Kung...and others who have followed Han Fei Tzu, there have been [those] who identify the thirteen as the Ten Evils and Three Karmas of Buddhism....the sum of six for Water and seven for Fire in the rise and fall of the Five Agents, the Seven Feelings and Six Desires, the twelve periods in the day plus one as their cycle....Among modern writers, Kao Heng believes the passage refers to the first thirty years in a hundred as that of man's growth, the next thirty (actually forty, but few can utilize them in full, Kao says) as a period of neither life nor death, that is, decline, and the remaining thirty years as a period of death.... 75.

3. Compare a similar saying in Lao Tzu, chapter

4. For the infant, see Lao Tzu, chapter 55.

Tao produces them.
Virtue fosters them.
Matter gives them physical form.
The circumstances and tendencies complete them.

Things are produced and then fostered. They are fostered and then given physical form. They are given physical form and then completed. Whence are they produced? From Tao. Whereby are they fostered? By te[a] (virtue). Whence do they get physical form? From matter. What brings about their completion? Circumstances and tendencies. Only by following (Tao) can things, without exception, obtain form, and only through circumstances and tendencies can things, without exception, be completed. For in general there is always a cause whereby things are produced and achievement completed. Since they are caused by something, they are all caused by Tao. Therefore if carried to the utmost, that too is the perfect Tao. If we all follow that which is caused, all will be just right.

Therefore the ten thousand things esteem Tao and honor virtue.

Tao is where things come from (or follow). Te is what things attain. Only by following Tao does one attain te. Therefore it is said that if one does not attain Tao, one is not esteemed.[1]

It is harmful to lose te. If one does not attain te, one is not honored.

Tao is esteemed and virtue is honored without anyone's order!

They always come spontaneously.

Order...act.[2]

Therefore Tao produces them and virtue fosters them.

They rear them and develop them.

They give them security and give them peace.

They nurture them and protect them.

It means that all things are complete in substance, each enjoying the protection of Tao and its substance will not be harmed.

Tao produces them but does not take possession of them.

It acts but does not rely on its own ability.

One acts but does not take possession of them.

It leads them but does not master them.

This is called profound and secret virtue.

One achieves te but does not know its ruler.

It comes from the hidden and dark realm and therefore we call it the profound and secret virtue.

NOTES

1. The words shih[b] (to lose) and tsun[c] (to esteem) are reversed in the translation, following T'ao Hung-ch'ing.

2. The commentary here is too corrupt to make any sense. I Shun-ting and other commentators believe that it is a later interpolation. See Hatano, III, p. 23.

CHAPTER 52

There was a beginning of the universe
Which may be called the Mother of the universe.[1]
He who has found the Mother (Tao)
And thereby understands her sons (things),
And having understood the sons,
Still keeps to its mother,
Will be free from danger throughout his lifetime.

Mother is the roots and son is the branches.

One should find the roots in order to understand the branches, but one should not cast away the roots in order to pursue the branches.

Close the mouth.
Shut the doors (of cunning and desires).

Out of the mouth come things and desires.

Through the door come things and desires.

And to the end of life there will be (peace) without toil.

As one is without ado and is always at leisure, "Therefore to the end of life there will be (peace) without toil."

Open the mouth.
Meddle with affairs.
And to the end of life there will be no salvation.

If one does not close the source but meddles with affairs, then "to the end of life there will be no salvation."

Seeing what is small is called enlightenment.

Keeping to weakness is called strength.

The task[2] of governing does not lie in the great. Seeing the great does not mean that one is enlightened; only by seeing the small can one be enlightened. Keeping to strength does not make one strong; only by keeping to weakness can one be strong.

Use the light.

Manifest the Tao in order to remove the delusions of the people.

Revert to enlightenment.

This means not to probe into things with the light.

And thereby avoid danger to one's life--
This is called practicing the eternal.

This means the eternity of Tao.

NOTES

1. Some editions have this commentary: When the beginning is good, nourishment and nurture will be good. Therefore when there is a beginning of the universe, it can be the mother of the universe.

2. Kung[a] here does not mean accomplishment but work, according to Hatano, III, p. 30.

CHAPTER 53

If I had but little[1] knowledge
I should, in walking on a broad way,
Fear getting off the road.

It means that if I had but little knowledge and walked on a broad way in the world, the only thing to be feared is behavior.[2]

Broad ways are extremely even,
But people are fond of bypaths.

This means that the great Tao is even and broad, but people still avoid it and do not follow it but love to follow bad by-paths. How much more if people behave in such a way as to block the broad way? Therefore it is said, "Broad ways are extremely even, but people are fond of bypaths."

The courts are exceedingly splendid,

Courts mean palaces, and "splendid" means clean and beautiful.

While the fields are exceedingly weedy,
And the granaries are exceedingly empty.

When the palaces are clean and beautiful, then the fields are exceedingly weedy and the granaries are exceedingly empty. One establishes the one (the ruler) but harms the life of the people.

Elegant clothes are worn,
Sharp weapons are carried,

Foods and drinks are enjoyed beyond limit,
And wealth and treasures are accumulated in excess.
This is robbery and extravagance.
This is indeed not Tao (the Way).

When things are obtained in violation of Tao, they are all evil. Being evil means robbery. When extravagance is obtained in violation of Tao, that is usurpation. Therefore, to use violation of Tao to explain violation of Tao is nothing but robbery and extravagance.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 194, note 1): The term Chieh-jan[a] can mean "firmly," "wisely," "especially," "hastily," and so on, and support for each can be found in ancient literature. But in spite of Ho-shang Kung's understanding of it as "great," most commentators, from Ch'eng Hsüan-ying down, have preferred to follow Chang Chan's commentaries on the Lieh Tzu, 4:2a, where it is understood as "small" or "subtle."

2. Shih[b] (getting off the road) is interpreted by Wang Pi as "to behave," "to act," that is, to interfere with things. For a similar interpretation of shih and wei[c] (to act), see Wang Pi, chapters 29 and 64.

CHAPTER 54

He who is well established (in Tao) cannot be pulled away.

He cannot be pulled away because he first makes the root firm and strong and then devotes his attention to the branches.

He who has a firm grasp (of Tao) cannot be separated from it.

He cannot be separated because he does not desire a great deal but acts according to his ability.

Thus from generation to generation his ancestral sacrifice will never be suspended.

If from generation to generation sons and grandsons transmit this Tao for sacrifice, then those ancestral sacrifices will never be suspended.

When one cultivates virtue in his person, it becomes genuine virtue.

When one cultivates virtue in his family, it becomes overflowing virtue.

This means that one starts by cultivating oneself to reach others. If one cultivates virtue in his person, then one becomes genuine. If one cultivates virtue in his family, it becomes overflowing virtue. If one can cultivate Tao without abandoning it, then what one does for others will become great.

When one cultivates virtue in his community, it

becomes lasting virtue.

When one cultivates virtue in his country, it becomes abundant virtue.

When one cultivates virtue in the world, it becomes universal.

Therefore the person should be viewed as a person.

The family should be viewed as a family.

The community should be viewed as a community.

The country should be viewed as a country.

They are all like that.

And the world should be viewed as the world.

This means to use the mind of the people to view the Tao of the world. In the Tao of the world, whether things are for or against one, whether lucky or unlucky, they all are also like the Tao of man.

How do I know this to be the case in the world? Through this.[1]

"This" refers to what is said earlier. It means that one looks at oneself in order to understand the world and does not look to the outside. That is what is meant in saying, "One may know the world without going out of doors."[2]

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 196, note 2): Most commentators agree that "this" refers to the cultivation of virtue in the person, in the family, and so forth.

2. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 47.

CHAPTER 55

He who possesses virtue in abundance
May be compared to an infant.
Poisonous insects[1] will not sting him.
Fierce beasts will not seize him.
Birds of prey will not strike him.

An infant seeks nothing and desires none. He does not offend the myriad things. Therefore he is a being who will not be stung by poisonous insects. He who possesses virtue in abundance does not offend things. Therefore there is nothing to harm his wholeness.

His bones are weak, his sinews tender, but his grasp is firm.

Because of weakness, he can grasp firmly.
He does not yet know the union of male and female,
But his organ[2] is aroused,

To arouse means to grow. There is nothing to harm his body and therefore he can grow to completion.[3] It means that if one possesses virtue in abundance, nothing can harm his te or change his genuineness. Those who are weak and do not contend and will therefore not be broken are all like this.

This means that his essence is at its height.
He may cry all day without becoming hoarse.

He does not wish to contend or desire. Therefore he may cry all day without becoming hoarse.

This means that his (natural) harmony is perfect.

To know harmony means to be in accord with the eternal.

The constancy of things consists in harmony.

Therefore if one knows harmony, one will attain constancy.

To be in accord with the eternal means to be enlightened.

Neither light nor dark, neither warm nor cool--that is constancy.

Without form and invisible--that means enlightenment.

To force the growth of life means ill omen.[4]

The growth of life cannot be forced. If it is, evil will result.

For the mind to employ the vital force without restraint means violence.

The heart should remain empty. One who employs vital force will be violent.

After things reach their prime, they begin to grow old,

Which means being contrary to Tao.

Whatever is contrary to Tao will soon perish.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 198, note 1): Following the Ho-shang Kung text. [Some] texts have "poisonous insects." Chiang Hsi-ch'ang mentions fifty texts that have "poisonous insects." In place of this expression, the Wang Pi text has "wasps, scorpions, and snakes." These words appear in the Ho-shang Kung's commentary. Probably they got into the Wang Pi text by mistake.

2. Chan's note (p. 198, note 2): Also following the Ho-shang Kung text and forty-five other texts (according to Chiang). Wang Pi's text has ch'üan[a] (complete), which sounds like the word for the male organ but makes no sense here.

3. Wang Pi's interpretation: "Grow to completion" instead of "Organ is aroused."

4. Chan's note (p. 198, note 3): Hsiang[b] (good omen) was occasionally used in ancient literature in the opposite sense. For example, see Tso Chuan, Duke Chao[c], 18th year.

CHAPTER 56

He who knows does not speak.

This is so because one follows Tzu-jan.

He who speaks does not know.

Because he would create trouble.

Close the mouth.

Shut the doors.

Blunt the sharpness.

This means one keeps and protects one's own nature.

Untie the tangles.

This means one keeps oneself free from causes for quarrel.

Soften the light.

If one is not especially prominent in any way, others will not particularly quarrel with him at all.

Become one with the dusty world.

If one does not particularly despise anything, then others will not particularly humiliate him at all.

This is called profound identification.

Therefore it is impossible either to be intimate and close to him or to be distant and indifferent to him.

If it is possible to be intimate and close, then it is possible to be distant and indifferent.

It is impossible either to benefit him or to harm him.

If one can be benefited, one can also be harmed.

It is impossible either to honor him or to disgrace him.

If one can be honored, one can also be disgraced.

For this reason he is honored by the world.

Nothing can be added to him.

CHAPTER 57

Govern the state with correctness.
Operate the army with surprise tactics.
Administer the empire by engaging in no activity.

If one governs the state with Tao, the state will be at peace. If one governs the state with correctness, there will be craftiness and justice. With nonactivity one can administer the world. In a previous chapter it is said, "An empire is often brought to order by having no activity. If one (likes to) undertake activity, he is not qualified to govern the empire."[1] Therefore, if one governs the world with correctness, one cannot administer the world and operate the army with surprise tactics. If one governs the country with Tao, one honors the roots so as to put an end to the branches. If one governs the world with correctness, one imposes punishment in order to devote oneself to the branches. The root will not be established and the branches will be shallow, and there will be nothing for the people. Therefore one is forced to resort to operate the army with the surprise tactics.

How do I know that this should be so?
Through this:
The more taboos and prohibitions there are in the world,

The poorer the people will be.
The more sharp weapons the people have,
The more troubled the state will be.

Sharp weapons are generally those which benefit oneself.[2] When the people are strong, the state is weak.

The more cunning and skill man possesses,
The more vicious things will appear.

If people are highly intelligent (cunning), cunning and falsehood will arise. If cunning and falsehood arise, then evil will occur.

The more laws and orders are made prominent,
The more thieves and robbers there will be.

If by correctness one wishes to put an end to evil, then one must use surprise tactics to operate the army, and there will be many regulations and taboos. The desire is to reduce poverty to shame, but people will be all the poorer. Sharp weapons are intended to strengthen the country, but the state will be more and more confused. All this is because the roots are abandoned in order to manage the branches. Hence these results.

Therefore the sage says:
I take no action and the people of themselves are transformed.
I love tranquility and the people of themselves become correct.
I engage in no activity and the people of themselves

become prosperous.

I have no desires and the people of themselves become simple.

What the ruler desires will be immediately followed by the people. If my desire is to be without desire, then the people will also be without desire and will of themselves become simple. These four are (examples) of honoring the roots so as to put an end to the branches.

NOTES

1. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 48.

2. Yen Ling-feng suggests that chi[a] (self) here should read min[b] (people). This seems reasonable because it follows Lao Tzu closely. A similar suggestion is made in Hatano, III, p. 48.

CHAPTER 58

When the government is nondiscriminative and dull,
The people are contented and generous.

This means that he who rules well is without form, without name, and without measures that can be mentioned. He is nondiscriminative and dull, and he ultimately achieves great order. Therefore it is said that "His government is nondiscriminative and dull." His people will not compete or strive for anything, and they will be broad and liberal, and contented and generous. Therefore it is said that the people are contented and generous."

When the government is searching and discriminative,
The people are disappointed and contentious.

[When the government] establishes legal measures and makes prominent rewards and punishments to examine treachery and falsehood, it is said to be searching and discriminative. The ruler being discriminative and divisive, the people will become competitive. Therefore it is said, "The people are disappointed and contentious."

Calamity is that upon which happiness depends;
Happiness is that in which calamity is latent.
Who knows when the limit will be reached?
Is there no correctness (used to govern the world)?

Who knows the limit of good government? Only when there is no correctness to be imposed and

when there are neither forms nor names will the world be greatly transformed without discrimination. This is the limit.

Then the correct again becomes the perverse.

If one "governs the state with correctness," one will naturally "operate the army with surprise tactics."[1] Therefore it is said, "The correct again becomes the perverse."

And the good will again become evil.

If one establishes goodness to bring harmony in the myriad things, there will naturally be the danger of evil.

The people have been deluded for a long time.

This is to say that as the people have been deluded and have lost the Tao for a long time, it is not good to demand from them correctness and goodness right away.

Therefore the sage is as pointed as a square but does not pierce.

To lead the people with the pointed square and to remove their evil, but not to use the pointed square to pierce things--this is what is meant by saying, "The great square has no corners."[2]

He is as acute as a knife but does not cut.

To be acute means to be incorruptible,[3] and to cut means to harm. It means to purify the people with incorruptibility and to enable them to remove their evil and uncleanliness but not to hurt them with incorruptibility.

He is as straight as an unbent line but does not extend.

This is to lead the people with uprightness and to enable them to remove their depravity but not to stir up things by inflexibility. This is what is meant by the saying, "What is most straight seems to be crooked."[4]

He is as bright as light but does not dazzle.

This is to use light to reveal wherein the people are deluded but not to use light to search for their secrets. This is what is meant by saying, "The Tao which is bright appears to be dark."[5] All these are to honor the root so as to put an end to the branches. One does not need to apply oneself to anything and all will return to its own.

NOTES

1. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 57.
2. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 41.
3. Lien[a] (acute) is here interpreted by Wang Pi in the sense of being incorruptible.
4. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 45.
5. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 41.

CHAPTER 59

To rule people and to serve Heaven is nothing better than to be frugal.

"Nothing better" means that nothing will surpass it. Frugality refers to the farmer. He manages his fieldwork and eliminates the weeds so that the crops become standardized and uniform. He preserves the natural state of things. He does not worry about the trouble of the fallowland, but removes the cause of the trouble of the fallowland. (The sage) receives the mandate of Heaven; below, he soothes the hundred families. There is nothing better than the example mentioned above.

Only by being frugal can one recover quickly.

This means to recover constancy early.

To recover quickly means to accumulate virtue heavily.

Only by heavily accumulating virtue and by not wanting to hurry can one recover his constancy early. Therefore it is said, "To recover quickly means to accumulate virtue heavily."

By the heavy accumulation of virtue one can overcome everything.

If one can overcome everything, then he will acquire a capacity the limit of which is beyond anyone's knowledge.

Because Tao is limitless.

When his capacity is beyond anyone's knowledge, he

is fit to rule a state.

It is impossible to keep the state by ruling it with limits.

He who possesses the Mother (Tao) of the state will last long.

That which gives a state peace is known as the Mother. To accumulate virtue heavily is only to plan for the root and then devote oneself to the branches.[1] Then one can come to the (right) end.

This means that the roots are deep and the stalks are firm, which is the way of long life and everlasting vision.[2]

NOTES

1. A similar statement is found in Wang Pi, chapters 38, 39, 52, and 57.

2. Chan's note (p. 205, note 2): "Long life and lasting vision" simply means long life....Waley contends that "fixed staring" (his translation) was used by the Taoists as a method of inducing trances. This interpretation is accurate in regard to later religious Taoists, but errs in reading yoga into the Lao Tzu. Waley interprets frugality as "laying up a store," and goes on to say that this 'laying of the new upon the old' is here used as a symbol for the reinforcing of one's stock of vital energy by quietist practice" (p. 213). He is here following Ho-shang Kung's commentary. This interpretation puts much yoga indeed into the Lao Tzu; many would join Duyvendak in rejecting Waley's interpretation.

CHAPTER 60

Ruling a big country is like cooking a small fish.
That means not to disturb. If one is hasty, one harms much, but if one remains quiet, one preserves one's genuineness.[1] Therefore the larger the land is, the quieter the rulers has to be.
Only then can one reach the heart of the multitude fully.
If Tao is employed to rule the empire,
Spiritual being will lose their supernatural power.
To rule a great empire, one should behave like cooking a small fish. If one rules over the empire in accordance with Tao, then the spiritual beings will lose their supernatural power.
Not that they lose their spiritual power,
But their spiritual power can no longer harm people.
This means that the spiritual power does not harm Tzu-jan. If things abide by Tzu-jan, the spiritual power cannot do anything to them. As the spiritual power cannot do anything to them, one does not know that spiritual power is spiritual power.
Not only will their supernatural power not harm people,
But the sage also will not harm people.
When one is in harmony with Tao, then the spiritual power will not harm people. If spiritual power does not harm people, one does not know that spiritual power is spiritual power. If one is

in harmony with Tao, then the sage will also not harm the people. If the sage does not harm the people, then one does not know that the sage is a sage. That means the people do not know about the spiritual power of spiritual beings or the sagacity of the sage. When the ruler relies on the net of power to deal with things, the government is on the decline. To bring about the situation of not knowing the spiritual power of spiritual beings or the sagacity of the sage is the ultimate of Tao.

When both do not harm each other,
Virtue will be accumulated in both for the benefit (of the people).

If spiritual power does not harm people, then the sage will also not harm people. If the sage will not harm the people, then spiritual power will also not harm the people. Therefore it is said, "When both do not harm each other, spiritual beings and the sage will be in accord with Tao "for the benefit (of the people)."

NOTE

1. A similar statement is found in Wang Pi, chapter 45.

CHAPTER 61

A big country may be compared to the lower part of a river.

If a sea occupies the position of bigness but stays low, a hundred rivers will flow into it. If a big country occupies a position of bigness but stays low, the world will flow into it. Therefore it is said, "A big country may be compared to the lower part of a river."

It is the converging point of the world.

It means the place to which the world converges.

It is the female of the world.

If one is quiet and does not seek anything, things will naturally return to him.

The female always overcomes the male by tranquility, And by tranquility she is underneath.

Because of her tranquility, (the female) can remain low. Female means the feminine sex. The male is hasty, restless, and greedy. The female is always tranquil and can therefore overcome the male. Because of her quietness and, furthermore, her ability to stay low, things move toward her.

A big state can take over a small state if it places itself below the small state;

"A big state places itself below" means that the big state places itself below the small state. The small state will submit to the big state.

And the small state can take over a big state if it places itself below the big state.

That means that the big state will take in the small state.

Thus some, by placing themselves below, take over (others),

And some, by being (naturally) low, take over (other states).

That means that if only each state will cultivate the humble and the lowly, each will find peace and ease in one's own place.

After all, what a big state wants is but to annex and herd others,

And what a small state wants is merely to join and serve others.

Since both big and small states get what they want,

The big state should place itself low.

If a small state cultivates the lowly, it can preserve itself and that is all, but it cannot thereby cause the world to return to it. But when a big state cultivates the lowly, then the world returns to it. Therefore it is said, "Since both big and small states get what they want, the big state should place itself low."

CHAPTER 62

Tao is the storehouse[1] of all things.

Ao[a] means the sun covered by cloud.[2] That means one can get protection

It is the good man's treasure

Treasure is to be used.

and the bad man's refuge

Refuge means to be preserved.

Fine words can buy honor,[3]

And fine deeds can gain respect from others.

That means Tao is ahead of all things. There is nothing more precious than Tao. Although there are treasures and jade horses, nothing is equal to Tao. When it is praised with fine words it can take away the sale of all goods. Therefore it is said, "Fine words can buy (honor)." When it is honored and I practice Tao, people will respond to it even at a distance of a thousand li.[4] Therefore it is said, "[Fine deeds] can gain respect from others."

Even if a man is bad, when has (Tao) rejected him?

Bad men should be protected. Tao will give them freedom.

Therefore on the occasion of crowning an emperor or installing the three ministers,[5]

That means to honor and practice Tao.

Rather than present large pieces of jade preceded by teams of four horses,

It is better to kneel and offer this Tao.

This is the Tao mentioned earlier. It means that on the occasion of crowning an emperor or installing the three ministers, to honor those positions and to respect the men is the way to practice Tao. Nothing is more honorable than this. Therefore, "Rather than present large pieces of jade preceded by teams of four horses, it is better to kneel and offer this Tao."

Why did the ancients highly value this Tao?

Did they not say, "Those who seek shall have it and those who sin shall be freed"?

For this reason it is valued by the world.

If one seeks, one will find. If one seeks freedom, one will find freedom. This applies everywhere. Therefore it is valued by the world.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 210, note 1): Literally, the southwestern corner of the house, the most highly honored place in the house, where family worship was carried out, grains and treasures were stored, and so forth.

2. Wang Pi does not interpret ao as the storehouse.

3. Chan's note (p. 210, note 2): The texts have shih-tsun-hsing[b] (buy honorable acts) and punctuate after tsun, making the sentence read: "Fine acts can sell, and honorable acts...." Yü Yüeh, on the authority of the Huai-nan Tzu, 12:11b and 18:9a, has added the second word "fine." The present translation follows him....

4. A li[c] is one-third of a mile.

5. Chan's note (p. 211, note 4): Grand tutor, grand preceptor, and grand protector.

CHAPTER 63

Act without action.

Do without ado.

Taste without tasting.

This is to take nonaction as the dwelling place, to teach without words,[1] and to take tastelessness for taste. This is the ultimate principle of government.

Whether it is big or small, many or few, repay hatred with virtue.

Slight hatred is not worth repaying. Great hatred, however, is condemned by the whole world. To be in accord with what is shared by the whole world [in denouncing hatred] is virtue.

Prepare for the difficult while it is still easy.

Deal with the big while it is still small.

Difficult undertakings have always started with what is easy.

And great undertakings have always started with what is small.

Therefore the sage never strives for the great,

And thereby the great is achieved.

He who makes rash promises surely lacks faith.

He who takes things too easily will surely encounter much difficulty.

For this reason even the sage regards things as difficult.

Even with the capacity of the sage, it is still difficult to prepare (for the difficult) while it is easy and (for the big) while it is small. How much more for those without the ability of the sage to wish to neglect this? Therefore it is said, "Even (the sage) regards this as difficult."

And therefore he encounters no difficulty.

NOTE

1. The same comment appears in Wang Pi, chapters 17, 23. In chapter 23 chü[a] (dwelling place) appears as chün[b] (master). Compare Lao Tzu, chapters 2 and 43.

CHAPTER 64

What remains still is easy to hold.
What is not yet manifest is easy to plan for.
"Because of this stillness, one should never forget the danger. In holding on to a thing, never forget its demise."[1] This is to plan without effort. Therefore it is said to be easy.
What is brittle is easy to crack.
What is minute is easy to scatter.
Although one loses nonbeing and enters into being, since it is minute and brittle, it is not enough to make a great effort. Therefore it is easy.
These four explain how one should be careful about the end. One should not fail to hold on because it is nothing, and one should not fail to scatter because it is subtle. Not to hold on to nonbeing will produce being, and not to scatter subtleness will produce bigness. Therefore if one carefully considers the danger at the end as one considers the trouble in the beginning, one will never fail.
Deal with things before they appear.
That means that there is not yet any omen of its stillness.
Put things in order before disorder arises.
That refers to the subtle and the brittle.
A tree as big as a man's embrace grows from a tiny shoot.

A tower of nine stories begins with a heap of earth.
The journey of a thousand <u>li</u>[a] starts from where one stands.
He who takes action fails.
He who grasps things loses them.
One should remove the subtle with careful consideration of the end and remove disorder with careful consideration of the subtle. If one tries to put things in order by action, and holds on to things by means of forms and names, difficulties will arise. Then cleverness and depravity will multiply. Thus one will fail.
For this reason the sage takes no action and therefore does not fail.
He grasps nothing and therefore he does not lose anything.
People in their handling of affairs often fail when they are about to succeed.
Because one is not careful about the end.
If one remains as careful at the end as he was at the beginning, there will be no failure.
Therefore the sage desires to have no desire.
He does not value rare treasures.
Though greed and desire may be small, strife and aspiration will arise because of them.
Though rare treasures may be small, greed and theft arise because of them.
He learns to be unlearned,[2] and returns to what the multitude has missed (Tao).

To be capable without learning is Tzu-jan. This explains that those who do not learn (to be unlearned) will miss.[3] Therefore, "He learns to be unlearned, and returns to what the multitude has missed."

Thus he supports all things in their natural state but does not take any action.

NOTES

1. Quoting the Book of Changes, "Appended Remarks," Part II, chapter 5.

2. Chan's note (p. 215, note 6): Wang Pi understands the expression "learn not learn" to mean that the sage learns without learning. Ho-shang Kung interprets it to mean that the sage learns what the multitude cannot learn.

3. This sentence is very obscure.

CHAPTER 65

In ancient times those who practiced Tao well
Did not seek to enlighten the people, but to make them ignorant.

Enlightenment means having many points of view and being clever and cunning so as to obscure one's simplicity. Ignorance means having no knowledge (cunning), keeping to the true state of things, and following Tzu-jan.

People are difficult to govern because they have too much knowledge.

If people have too much knowledge (cunning) and are clever and deceitful, it will be difficult to govern them.

Therefore he who rules the state through knowledge is a robber of the state.

Knowledge is the same as government. One who governs with knowledge is called a robber. Therefore it is called knowledge. People are difficult to govern because they have too much knowledge. One should strive to close the mouth and shut the doors,[1] and "cause people to be without knowledge or desire."[2] If one tries to arouse people by cunning and devices, one's evil mind is already aroused, and if one further uses clever tricks to prevent the falsehood of people, people will be aware of his tricks and will immediately try to get away from them. Thus

thoughts will be secret and clever and their treachery and falsehood will multiply. Therefore it is said, "He who rules the state through knowledge is a robber of the state." He who rules a state not through knowledge is a blessing to the state.

One who knows these two things also (knows) the standard.

Always to know the standard is called profound and secret virtue.

Virtue becomes deep and far-reaching. Standard means agreement. What is agreed upon now and in former times cannot be abolished. "If one knows the standard, it is called profound and secret virtue. Virtue becomes deep and far-reaching."

And with it all things return to their original state.

That means to return to their true state. Then complete harmony will be reached.

NOTES

1. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapters 52 and 56.
2. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 3.

CHAPTER 66

The great rivers and seas are kings of all mountain streams

Because they skillfully stay below them.

That is why they can be their kings.

Therefore, to be the superior of the people,

One must, in the use of words, place himself below them.

And to be ahead of the people,

One must, in one's own person, follow them.

Therefore the sage places himself above the people, and they do not feel his weight.

He places himself in front of them, and the people do not harm him.

Therefore the world rejoices in praising him without getting tired of it.

It is precisely because he does not compete that the world cannot compete with him.

[As in chapter 31, there is no commentary by Wang Pi in this chapter.]

CHAPTER 67

All the world says that my Tao is great and does not
seem to resemble (the ordinary).[1]
It is precisely because it is great that it does not
resemble (the ordinary).
If it did resemble, it would have been small for a
long time.

Being small for a long time means that smallness
has already lasted for a long time. To resemble
will lose that which makes a thing great.

Therefore it is said, "If it did resemble, it
would have been small for a long time."

I have three treasures. Guard and keep them:
The first is deep love,[2]
The second is frugality,
And the third is not to dare to be ahead of the world.
Because of deep love, one is courageous.

"Deep love helps one to win in the case of
attack and to be firm in the case of defense."[3]

Therefore one is courageous.
Because of frugality, one is generous.

If one loves thrift and keeps down expenses,
then the world will not be exhausted. Therefore
one is generous.

Because of not daring to be ahead of the world, one
becomes the leader of the world.

Only if one places oneself in the background and
puts oneself away will all people come to one.[4]

Then one can "establish oneself for the benefit
of the world"[5] and thus be the leader.

Now, to be courageous by forsaking deep love,

This means that one is preferred to the other.

To be generous by forsaking frugality,
And to be ahead of the world by forsaking following
behind--
This is fatal.
For deep love helps one to win in the case of attack,

Being charitable and not avoiding difficulties,
one therefore conquers.

And to be firm in the case of defense.
When Heaven is to save a person,
Heaven will protect him through deep love.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 220, note 2): The term pu-hsiao[a] (not to resemble) is open to many possible interpretations: "unworthy," "seems to be like folly," "indescribable," "cannot be distinguished," and so on.

2. Chan's note (p. 220, note 3): The word tz'u[b] (deep love) has been variously translated as "pity," "love," "compassion," and so on. It simply means great or deep love. In chapters 18 and 19 it is used with special reference to the love of parents for children. Here it is used with reference to all men.

3. Read ch'en[c] (to spread out) as chan[d] (to attack), to conform with the Lao Tzu text below.

4. Referring to Lao Tzu, chapter 7.

5. Quoting the Book of Changes, "Appended Remarks," Part I, chapter 11.

CHAPTER 68

A skillful leader of troops is not oppressive with
his military strength.
A leader of troops is the general of soldiers.
What a man of military strength likes best is
to be ahead of people and to attack people.
A skillful fighter does not become angry.
Following behind but not getting in the front,[1]
responding but not singing first, one will not
be angry.
A skillful conqueror does not compete with people.
That means not competing.
One who is skillful in using men puts himself below
them.
This is called the virtue of noncompeting.
This is called the strength to use men.
If people use others but do not put themselves
below them, strength cannot be used.
This is called matching Heaven, the highest principle
of old.

NOTE

1. Referring to Lao Tzu, chapter 7.

CHAPTER 69

The strategists say:

"I dare not take the offensive but I take the
defensive;
I dare not advance an inch but I retreat a foot."

This means:

To march without formation,
That means not to stop advancing.[1]
To stretch one's arm without showing it,
To confront enemies without seeming to meet them,
To march means to walk in battle formation. It
means to practice modesty, sympathy, and deep
love, and not to dare to go ahead of things.
To fight a battle is similar to marching
without formation, to stretch one's arm without
seeming to meet them, to hold weapons without
seeming to have them, and to confront enemies
without seeming to meet them. All this means
that there is no one who could oppose him.
To hold weapons without seeming to have them.
There is no greater disaster than to make light of
the enemy.
Making light of the enemy will destroy my treasures.
This means that my sympathy, deep love, and
modesty are not intended to achieve strength
so there will be no enemy in the world. If I
cannot help and finally arrive at the point of
making light of the enemy, that will be a great

disaster for me. Treasures mean the three
treasures.[2] Therefore it is said, "It will
destroy my treasures."

Therefore when armies are mobilized and issues joined,
The man who is sorry over the fact will win.

To mobilize means to rise in action and to join
issues means to face each other. The man who
is sorry will have sympathy for others and will
not seek benefit or avoid harm. He will
therefore win.

NOTES

1. An obscure sentence, Hatano (III, p. 94) thinks that this note probably belongs to Ho-shang Kung's commentary on the Lao Tzu and has been inadvertently inserted here.

2. Wang Pi may be thinking of the three treasures in Lao Tzu, chapter 67.

CHAPTER 70

My doctrines are very easy to understand and very easy to practice,

But none in the world can understand or practice them.

It is possible to know (the world) without going out of the door or looking out the window.[1] That is why it says it is very easy to understand. One accomplishes without any action.[2] Therefore it is said, "My doctrine is very easy to practice." It is said that "none in the world can understand them" because people are deluded by hotheadedness and desire, and it is said that "none in the world can practice them" because people are deluded by glory and gain.

My doctrines have a source (Nature); my deeds have a master (Tao).

By source is meant the source of the myriad things. By ruler is meant the lord of the myriad things.

It is because people do not understand this that they do not understand me.

Since these words have a source and deeds have a master, he who has the knowledge cannot help knowing them.

Few people know me, and therefore I am highly valued.

Since my words have come from such depth, those who can understand them are rare. The fewer there are who know me, the less will there be any match for me. Therefore it is said, "Few people know me, and therefore I am highly valued."

Therefore the sage wears a coarse cloth on top and carries jade within his bosom.

Those who wear coarse clothing "become one with the dusty world,"[3] and those who carry jade treasure its genuineness. The reason the sage is difficult to understand is because he is one with the dusty world and is not different, and he carries jade within his bosom and does not change. Therefore he is hard to know and is highly valued.

NOTES

1. Paraphrasing Lao Tzu, chapter 47.
2. Ibid.
3. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapters 4, 56.

CHAPTER 71

To know that you do not know is the best.
To pretend to know when you do not know is a
disease.
Not to know that knowledge is not reliable
would be a disease.
Only when one recognizes this disease as a disease
can one be free from the disease.
The sage is free from the disease.
Because he recognizes this disease to be disease,
he is free from it.[1]

NOTE

1. In the Tao-te chen-ching chi-chu, there is this comment by Wang Pi on this sentence: Those who recognize this disease to be disease are therefore free from the disease.

CHAPTER 72

When the people do not fear what is dreadful,
Then what is greatly dreadful will descend on them.
Do not reduce the living space of their dwellings.
Do not oppress their lives.

Dwelling means to be tranquil and taking no action, and to live means to be modest and not full. If one deviates from purity and tranquility, practices fierceness and desires, discards one's modesty, and gives rein to power and violence, then things will become disturbed and people will avoid him. People can no longer be controlled by power. As people cannot stand this power, both above and below will totally collapse. Heaven will execute him. Therefore it is said, "When the people do not fear what is dreadful, then what is greatly dreadful will descend on them. Do not reduce the living space of their dwelling. Do not oppress their lives." It means that power cannot be relied on.

It is because you do not oppress them
that they are not oppressed.

This means not to oppress oneself.
As one does not oppress oneself, the whole world will not oppress him.

Therefore the sage knows himself but does not show himself.

He does not himself show what he knows so that he may shine and be powerful.

He loves himself but does not exalt himself.

If one sets too high a value on oneself, then his dwelling will be reduced and his life oppressed.

Therefore he rejects the one but accepts the other.

CHAPTER 73

He who is brave in daring will be killed.

One will surely not have a natural death.

He who is brave in not daring will live.

One will surely reach the full length[1] of one's life.

Of these two, one is advantageous and one is harmful.

Both cases show bravery but the applications of bravery are different. The advantage and harm are different. Therefore it is said, "One is advantageous and one is harmful."

Who knows why Heaven dislikes what it dislikes?

Even the sage considers it a difficult question.

Shui[a] means "which person?" It means: Who can know the reason why the world dislikes things.[2] Only the sage knows. The knowledge of the sage still makes it difficult to be brave in daring. How much more for one who has not the knowledge of the sage but who wants to act with bravery and daring? Therefore it is said, "The sage considers it a difficult question."

The Way of Heaven does not compete, and yet it skillfully achieves victory.

"It is precisely because he does not compete that the world connot compete with him."[3]

and yet skillfully responds to things.

To follow will result in good fortune and to oppose will result in evil fortune. One does not speak and yet skillfully responds to things.

It comes to you without your invitation.

If one places oneself in a lower position, things will come of themselves.

It is not anxious about things and yet it plans well.

Heaven hangs out images so that fortune and misfortune can be seen. Before things occur, one has to plan for them. When there is stillness, one does not forget the danger,[4] and when a thing is not yet manifest, one plans for it.[5] Therefore it is said, "It is not anxious about things and yet it plans well."

Heaven's net is indeed vast.

Though its meshes are wide, it misses nothing.

NOTES

1. Ch'i[b] (equal) here reads chi[c], to complete, to fulfill, or to accomplish, as in Wang Pi, chapter 17.

2. In Lieh Tzu, 6:4a, Lao Tzu's saying, "Who knows why Heaven dislike what it dislikes" is quoted. In his commentary on this quotation, Chang Chan quoted Wang Pi as saying, "It means: Who can know the will of Heaven? Only the sage knows."

3. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 22.

4. Book of Changes, "Appended Remarks," Part II, chapter 5.

5. Compare similar comments in Lao Tzu, chapter 64, and Wang Pi's commentary on its opening sentences.

CHAPTER 74

The people are not afraid of death.
Why, then, threaten them with death?
Suppose the people are always afraid of death and
    we can seize those who are vicious and kill
    them.
Who would dare to do so?
    To create disorder and uncommon tactics is
    called vicious.
There is always the master executioner (Heaven)
    who kills.
To undertake executions for the master executioner
    is like hewing wood for the master carpenter.
Whoever undertakes to hew wood for the master
    carpenter rarely escapes injuring his own
    hands.

He who opposes is resented and hated by those who follow. Unkindness is disliked by all. Therefore it is said, "There is always the master executioner."

CHAPTER 75

The people starve because the ruler eats too much
    tax-grain.
Therefore they starve.
They are difficult to rule because their ruler
    does too many things.
Therefore they are difficult to rule.
The people take death lightly because their ruler
    strives for life too vigorously.
Therefore they take death lightly.
It is only those who do not seek after life that
    excel in making life valuable.
    The reason people will avoid him and
    government is disorderly comes from above
    and not from below. People follow those
    above.[1]

NOTE

1. According to Tung Ssu-ching and the Tao-te chen-ching chi-chu, there are these words here in the Wang Pi text: [I] suspect that this [chapter] was not written by Lao Tzu.

CHAPTER 76

When man is born, he is tender and weak.
At death, he is stiff and hard.
All things, the grass as well as trees, are tender and supple while alive.
When dead, they are withered and dried.
Therefore the stiff and the hard are companions of death.
The tender and the weak are companions of life.
Therefore if the army is strong, it will not win.
He who strengthens his army to oppress the world will be hated by all. Therefore it is certain that he will not succeed.
If a tree is stiff, it will break.[1]
This is brought about by things.
The strong and the great are inferior,
That means the roots of the tree.
while the tender and the weak are superior.
That means the branches of the tree.[2]

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 233, note 2): Fu I..., Yü Yüeh..., and Ma Hsü-lun are unanimous in saying that ping[a] (soldier) in the Wang Pi text and kung[b] (together) in the Ho-shang Kung text are corruptions of the word che[c] (to break).

2. "Inferior" and "superior" also refer to the lower or upper portions of the tree.

CHAPTER 77

Heaven's Way is indeed like the bending of a bow.
When (the string) is high, bring it down.
When it is low, raise it up.
When it is excessive, reduce it.
When it is insufficient, supplement it.
The Way of Heaven reduces whatever is excessive and supplements whatever is insufficient.
The way of man is different.
It reduces the insufficient to offer to the excessive.
Who is able to have excess to offer to the world?
Only the man of Tao.
Therefore the sage acts, but does not rely on his own ability.
He accomplishes his task, but does not claim credit for it.
He has no desire to display his excellence.

Only when one's virtue is identical with that of Heaven and Earth[1] can one embrace all, as in the case of the Way of Heaven. As in the case of the capacities of man, each clings to its own body, and they cannot be equalized. Only by not clinging to one's own body and not keeping Nature for oneself can one be identified with the virtue of Heaven and Earth,

This is to say that Tao alone can be full and yet completely empty, reduce what it has in

order to make up for what it has not, "soften the light" and "become one with the dusty world,"[2] and be vast and equal. Therefore the sage does not want to display his excellence when making things equal in the world.

NOTES

1. Alluding to the Book of Changes, commentary on hexagram number 1, Ch'ien[a] (Heaven).

2. Quoting Lao Tzu, chapter 4.

CHAPTER 78

There is nothing softer and weaker than water,
And yet there is nothing better for attacking hard
and strong things.
For this reason there is no substitute for it.
I[a] (by means of) means to use. Ch'i[b] (that
refers to water. It means that there is no
substitute for the use of the softness of water.
All the world knows that the weak overcomes the
strong and the soft overcomes the hard.
But none can practice it.
Therefore the sage says:
He who suffers disgrace for his country
Is called the lord of the land.
He who takes upon himself the country's misfortunes,
Becomes the king of the empire.
Straight words seem to be their opposite.

CHAPTER 79

To patch up great hatred is surely to leave some
hatred behind.

If one has not settled a contract clearly so
that great hatred has resulted, and then
tries to appease by virtue, the injury will not
be healed. Therefore there remains some
hatred.

How can this be regarded as good?

Therefore the sage keeps the left-hand portion
(obligation) of a contract[1]

The left-hand portion of a contract is to
prevent the cause of hatred.

And does not blame the other party.

Virtuous people attend to their left-hand portions,

Virtuous people are mindful of their contract
and do not allow hatred to arise and then
blame others.

While those without virtue attend to other people's
mistakes.

Other people's mistakes mean attending to
people's errors.

"The Way of Heaven has no favorite.
It is always with the good man."[2]

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 237, note 1): In ancient times, contracts were written on two bamboo slips which fitted together. The left one, being a symbol of inferiority, was given the debtor.

2. Chan's note (p. 237, note 2): These sayings, probably an ancient proverb, are also found with slight variation in the inscription referred to in chapter 42, note 5.

CHAPTER 80

Let there be a small country with few people.

A small country with few people can still be induced to return to former times. How much more can a big country with many people? Therefore a small country is mentioned here for discussion.

Let there be ten times and a hundred times[1] as many utensils

But let them not be used.

This means that although people have ten times and a hundred times as many utensils but have no use for them. Why worry about insufficiency?

Let the people value their lives[2] highly and not migrate far.

Let people not use their utensils but only value their own bodies. Let them not be greedy for goods and gifts but be contented with their dwellings. And let them value their lives highly and not migrate afar.

Even if there are ships and carriages, none will ride in them.

Even if there are armor and weapons, none will display them.

Let the people again knot cords and use them (in place of writing).

Let them relish their food, beautify their clothing, be content with their homes, and

delight in their customs.

Though neighboring communities overlook one another and the crowing of cocks and barking of dogs can be heard,

Yet the people there may grow old and die without ever visiting one another.

They will desire nothing.

NOTES

1. Chan's note (p. 238, note 1): According to Yü Yüeh, shih-po[a] (ten, hundred) means "military weapons." [Some Japanese commentators] understand shih-po and ch'i[b] (utensils) to mean "people with talents ten times or a hundred times more than the ordinary." In view of the following lines, ch'i is better understood as "utensils" than as "talents."

2. Chan's note (p. 239, note 2): Literally, "taking death seriously."

CHAPTER 81

True words are not beautiful;
Their reality consists of substance.
Beautiful words are not true.
Their root lies in simplicity.
A good man does not argue;
He who argues is not a good man.
A wise man has no extensive knowledge;
His ultimate is in the One.
He who has extensive knowledge is not a wise man.
The sage does not accumulate for himself.
Not selfishly to want things for oneself
but only to associate with the good. Leave
things alone, that is all.
The more he uses for others, the more he has
himself.
Because people honor him.
The more he gives to others, the more he possesses
of his own.
Because people will come to him.
The Way of Heaven is to benefit others and not to
injure.
(The Way of Heaven) moves and always produces
and completes things.
The Way of the sage is to act but not to compete.
Because the sage follows (the Way of) Heaven
which only benefits but does not injure.

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