

TAO TEH KING  
(LIBER CLVII)

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THE TAO TEH KING  
(LIBER CLVII)

A New Translation by

KO YUEN  
(ALEISTER CROWLEY)

[To which is added

*KHING KĀNG KING*  
(LIBER XXI)

written down by

KO YUEN

in the Episode of the Dynasty of Wu

and made into a Rime by

ALEISTER CROWLEY]

Being

THE EQUINOX

Volume III, No. VIII.

The Official Organ of the A.: A.:

The Review of Scientific Illuminism.

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*

The following etext of *Liber CLVII* was key-entered in the first instance by Soror OYAHBE from the version printed in the 1975 first edition of *Equinox III* (8), edited by H.P. Smith and published by Thelema Publications of King's Beach, California. Some variant readings and additional notes in Crowley's commentary were added from the version printed as *Aleister Crowley's Tao Teh King* edited by Steven Skinner (London: Askin / New York: Weiser, 1976), a few footnotes added, a copy of *Liber XXI* (based on a key-entry by persons unknown, possibly Bill Heidrick) appended, and the whole work formatted for circulation as a PDF, by Frater Tripudians Stella in September 2003 E.V.

*Love is the law, love under will.*

DEDICATED to the Logos of this Aeon, To Mega Therion,  
who broke the bonds of restriction.

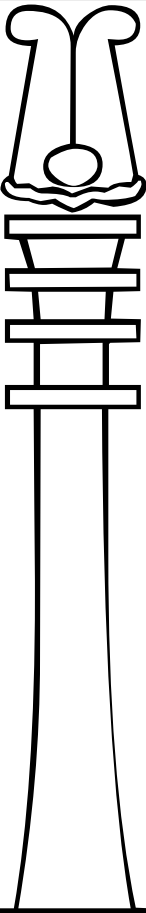
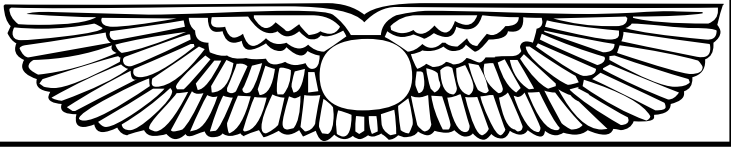
IN MEMORY of two students of Thelema, Frater One Three  
Two and Frater Theophilos, and with

GRATEFUL APPRECIATION to Soror Alta Via who brought  
this treatise to light, and to Soror Meral who assisted greatly in  
its production and who was the inspiration of this  
accomplishment.

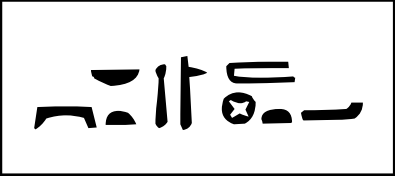
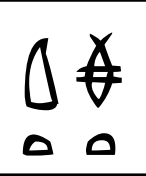
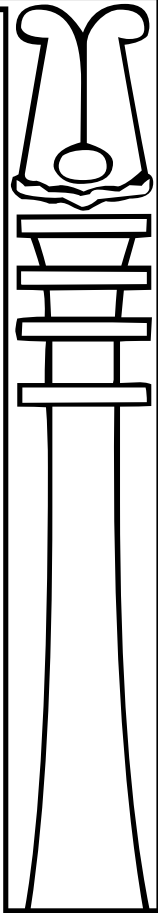
Soror Grimaud

September 8th, 1974 E.V.





LIBER  
 CLVII  
 道德經  
 TAO  
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 KING





A.:A.:  
Publication in Class B



# *Preface*

The True, The Abiding TAO!  
Who Understandeth Hath;  
Who Hath the TAO is Here and Now  
In Silence of the Path.

*LIBER XXI*



## *Introduction*

I bound myself to devote my life to Magick at Easter 1898, and received my first initiation\* on November 18 of that year.

My friend and climbing companion, Oscar Eckenstein, gave me my first instructions in learning the control of the mind early in 1901 in Mexico City. Shri Parananda, Solicitor General of Ceylon and an eminent writer upon and teacher of Yoga from the orthodox Shaivite standpoint, and Bhikkhu Ananda Metteya,† the great English Adept, who was one of my earliest instructors in Magick and joined the Sangha in Burma in 1902, gave me my first groundings in mystical theory and practice. I spent some months of 1901 in Kandy, Ceylon, with the latter until success crowned my work.

I also studied all varieties of Asiatic philosophy, especially with regard to the practical question of spiritual development, the Sufi doctrines, the Upanishads, the Sankhya, Vedanta, the Bhagavad-Gita and Purana, the Dhammapada, and many other classics, together with numerous writings on the Tantra and Yoga of such men as Patanjali, Vivekananda, etc. Not a few of these teachings are as yet wholly unknown to scholars. I made the scope of my studies as comprehensive as possible, omitting no school of thought however unimportant or repugnant.

I made a critical examination of all these teachers in the light of my practical experiences. The physiological and psychological uniformity of mankind guaranteed that the diversity of expression concealed a unity of significance. This discovery, furthermore, was confirmed by reference to Jewish, Greek and Celtic traditions. One quintessential truth was common to all cults, from the Hebrides to the Yellow Sea, and even the main branches proved essentially identical. It was only the foliage that exhibited incompatibility.

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\* In the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. — T.S.

† Allan Bennett; a G.D. adept who subsequently became a Buddhist monk. — T.S.

When I walked across China in 1905-6, I was fully armed and accoutred by the above qualifications to attack the till-then-insoluble problem of the Chinese conception of religious truth. Practical studies of such Mongolians as I had met in my travels, had already suggested to me that their acentric conception of the universe might represent the correspondence in consciousness of their actual psychological characteristics. I was therefore prepared to examine the doctrines of their religious and philosophical Masters without prejudice such as had always rendered nugatory the efforts of missionary sinologists and indeed all oriental scholars with the single exception of Rhys Davids. Until his time translators had invariably assumed, with absurd naïvité, or more often arrogant bigotry, that a Chinese writer must either be putting forth a more or less distorted and degraded variation of some Christian conception, or utterly puerile absurdities.

Even so great a man as Max Müller in his introduction to the *Upanishads*\* seems only half inclined to admit that the apparent triviality and folly of many passages in these so-called sacred writings might owe their appearance to our ignorance of the historical and religious circumstances, a knowledge of which would render them intelligible.

During my solitary wanderings among the mountainous wastes of Yun Nan, the spiritual atmosphere of China penetrated my consciousness, thanks to the absence of any intellectual impertinences from the organ of knowledge. The *TAO TEH KING* revealed its simplicity and sublimity to my soul, little by little, as the conditions of my physical life, no less than of my spiritual, penetrated the sanctuaries of my spirit. The philosophy of Lao Tze communicated itself to me, despite the persistent efforts of my mind to compel it to conform with my preconceived notions of what the text must mean. This process, having thus taken root in my innermost intuition during those tremendous months of wandering across Yun Nan, grew continually throughout succeeding years.

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\* [Volume I in the OUP *Sacred Books of the East* series.]

Whenever I found myself able once more to withdraw myself from the dissipations and distractions which contact with civilisation forces upon one, no matter how vigorously he may struggle against their insolence, to the sacred solitude of the desert, whether among the Sierras of Spain, or the sand of the Sahara, I found that the philosophy of Lao Tze resumed its sway upon my soul, subtler and stronger on each successive occasion.

But neither Europe nor Africa can show such desolation as America. The proudest, stubbornest, bitterest peasant of deserted Spain, the most primitive and superstitious Arab of the remotest oases, are a little more than kin and never less than kind at their worst; whereas in the United States one is almost always conscious of an instinctive lack of sympathy and understanding with even the most charming and cultured people. It was therefore during my exile in America that the doctrines of Lao Tze developed most rapidly in my soul, even forcing their way outward until I felt it imperious, nay inevitable, to express them in terms of conscious thought.

No sooner had this resolve taken possession of me than I realized that the task approximated to impossibility. His very simplest ideas, the primitive elements of his thought, had no true correspondences in any European terminology. The very first word Tao presented a completely insoluble problem. It had been translated "Reason," the "Way," "Tō Oυ." None of these cover the faintest conception of the Tao.

The Tao is "Reason" in this sense, that the substance of things may be in part apprehended as being that necessary relation between the elements of thought which determines the laws of reason. In other words, the only reality is that which compels us to connect the various forms of illusion as we do. It is thus evidently unknowable, and expressible neither by speech nor by silence. All that we can know about it is that there is inherent in it a power (which, however, is not itself) by virtue whereof all beings appear in forms congruous with the nature of necessity.

The Tao is also the “Way” in the following sense. Nothing exists except as a relation with other similarly postulated ideas. Nothing can be known in itself but only as one of the participants in a series of events. Reality is therefore in the motion, not in the things moved. We cannot apprehend anything except as one postulated element of an observed impression of change. We may express this in other terms as follow. Our knowledge of anything is in reality the sum of our observations of its successive movements, that is to say, of its path from the “Way.” It is not a thing in itself in the sense of being an object susceptible of apprehension by sense of mind. It is not the cause of anything, but the category under lying all existence or event and therefore true and real as they are illusory, being merely landmarks invented for convenience in describing our experiences. The Tao possesses no power to cause anything to exist or to take place. Yet our experience, when analyzed, tells us that the only reality of which we may be sure is this path or “Way” which resumes the whole of our knowledge.

As for “ $T\omicron \ 'O\nu$ ,”\* which superficially might seem the best translation of Tao as described in the text, it is the most misleading of the three. For “ $T\omicron \ 'O\nu$ ” possesses an extensive connotation implying a whole system of Platonic concepts than which nothing can be more alien to the essential quality of the Tao. Tao is neither being nor not-being in any sense which Europe could understand. It is neither existence nor a condition or form of existence. At the same time,  $T\omicron \ M\eta \ 'O\nu$ † gives no idea of Tao. Tao is altogether alien to all that class of thought. From its connection with “that principle which necessarily underlies the fact that events occur,” one might suppose that the 'Becoming' of Heraclitus might assist us to describe the Tao. But the Tao is not a principle at all of that kind. To understand it requires an altogether different state of mind to any with which European thinkers in general are familiar. It is necessary to pursue unflinchingly the path of spiritual development on the lines indicated by the Sufis, the Hindus and the Buddhist; and having reached the Trance called

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\* [*Grk.*, approx. “being” or “the existent.”]

† [*Grk.*, approx. “non-being” or “the non-existent” (by negation from  $T\omicron \ 'O\nu$ )]

Nerodha-Sammapati, in which are destroyed all forms soever of consciousness, there appears in that abyss of annihilation the germ of an entirely new type of idea, whose principal characteristic is this: that the entire concatenation of one's previous experiences and conceptions could not have happened at all, save by virtue of this indescribable necessity.

I am only too painfully aware that the above exposition is faulty in every respect. In particular, it presupposes in the reader considerable familiarity with the substance, thus practically begging the question. It must also prove almost wholly unintelligible to the average reader, him, in fact, whom I especially aim to interest. For his sake, I will try to elucidate the matter by an analogy. Consider electricity. It would be absurd to say that electricity was any of the phenomena by which we know it. We take refuge in the *petitio principii* of saying that electricity is that form of energy which is the principle cause of such and such phenomena. Suppose now that we eliminate this idea as evidently illogical. What remains? We must not hastily answer, "nothing remains." There is something inherent in the nature of consciousness, reason, perception, sensation, and of the universe of which they inform us, which is responsible for the fact that we observe these phenomena and not others; that we reflect upon them as we do, and not otherwise. But even deeper than this, part of the reality of the inscrutable energy which determines the form of our experience consists in determining that experience should take place at all. It should be clear that this has nothing to do with any of the Platonic conceptions of the nature of things.

The least abject asset in the intellectual bankruptcy of European thought is the Hebrew Qabalah. Properly understood it is a system of symbolism infinitely elastic, assuming no axioms, postulating no principles, asserting no theorems, and therefore adaptable, of managed adroitly, to describe any conceivable doctrine. It has been my continual study since 1898, and I have found it of infinite value in the study of the TAO TEH KING. By its aid I was able to attribute the ideas of Lao Tze to an order with which I was exceedingly

familiar and whose practical worth I had repeatedly proved by using it as the basis of the analysis and classification of all Aryan and Semitic religions and philosophies. Despite the essential difficulty of correlating the ideas of Lao Tze with any others, the persistent application of the Qabalistic keys eventually unlocked his treasure house. I was able to explain to myself his teachings in terms of familiar systems.\*

This achievement broke the back of my Sphinx. Having once reduced Lao Tze to Qabalistic form, it was easy to translate the result into the language of philosophy. I had already done much to create a new language based on English with the assistance of a few technical terms borrowed from Asia, and above all by the use of a novel conception of the idea of number and algebraic and arithmetical proceedings, to convey the results of spiritual experience to intelligent students.

It is therefore not altogether without confidence that I present this translation of the TAO TEH KING to the public. I hope and believe that careful study of the text, as elucidated by my commentary, will enable serious aspirants to the hidden wisdom to understand with fair accuracy what Lao Tze taught.

It must, however, be laid to heart that the essence of his system will inevitably elude intellectual apprehension unless it be illuminated from above by actual living experience of the truth. Such experience is only to be attained by unswerving application to the practices which he advocated. Nor must the aspirant content himself with the mere attainment of spiritual enlightenment, however sublime. All such achievements are barren unless they be regarded as the means rather than the end of spiritual progress, and allowed to infiltrate every detail of the life, not only of the spirit but of the senses. The Tao can never be known until it interprets the most trivial actions of everyday routine. It is a fatal mistake to discriminate between the

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\* Col. XLVI of 777 is titled "System of Taoism." The correspondences given there vary on a few points from Crowley's later attributions, first published in *The Book of Thoth* (Appendix B., diagram "The Chinese Cosmos" and accompanying text). — T.S.



spiritual importance of meditation and playing golf. To do so is to create an internal conflict. "Let there be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing; for thereby there cometh hurt."\* He who knows the Tao knows it to be the source of all things soever; the most exalted spiritual ecstasy and the most trivial internal impressions are, from our point of view, equally illusions, worthless masks, which hide, with grotesque painted pasteboard fake and lifeless, the living face of truth. Yet from another point of view they are equally expressions of the ecstatic genius of truth - natural images of the reaction between the essence of one's self and one's particular environment at the moment of their occurrence. They are equally tokens of the Tao, by whom, in whom, and of whom, they are. To value them for themselves is deny the Tao and to be lost in delusion. To despise them is to deny the omnipresence of the Tao and to suffer the illusion of sorrow. To discriminate between them is to set up the accursed dyad, to permit the insanity of intellect to overwhelm the intuition of truth, and to create civil war in the consciousness.

From 1908 to 1918, the TAO TEH KING was my continual study. I constantly recommended it to my friends as the supreme masterpiece of initiated wisdom and I was as constantly disappointed when they declared that it did not impress them, especially as my preliminary descriptions of the book had aroused their keenest interest. I thus came to see that the fault lay with Legge's translation, and I felt myself impelled to undertake the task of presenting Lao Tze in language informed by the sympathetic understanding which initiation and spiritual experience had conferred on me. During my Great Magical Retirement on Aesopus Island in the Hudson River during the summer of 1918, I set myself to this work, but I discovered immediately that I was totally incompetent. I therefore appealed to an Adept named Amalantrah, with whom I was at that time in almost daily communion. He came readily to my aid and exhibited to me a codex of the original, which conveyed to me with absolute certitude the exact significance of the text. I was able to divine without

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\* [AL, I. 22]

hesitation or doubt the precise manner in which Legge had been deceived. He had translated the Chinese with singular fidelity, yet in almost every verse the interpretation was altogether misleading. There was no need to refer to the text from the point of view of scholarship.

I had merely to paraphrase his translation in the light of actual knowledge of the true significance of the terms employed. Anyone who cares to take the trouble to compare the two versions will be astounded to see how slight a remodeling of a paragraph is sufficient to disperse the obstinate obscurity of prejudice and let loose a fountain and a flood of living light to kindle the gnarled prose of stolid scholarship into the burgeoning blossom of lyrical flame.

I completed my translation within three days, but during the last five years I have constantly reconsidered every sentence. The manuscript has been lent to a number of friends, scholars who have commended my work, and aspirants who have appreciated its adequacy to present the spirit of the Master's teaching. Those who have been disappointed with Legge's version were enthusiastic about mine. This circumstance is in itself sufficient to assure me that Love's labour has not been lost, and to fill me with enthusiastic confidence that the present publication will abundantly contribute to the fulfillment of my True Will for which I came to earth, and wring labour and sorrow to the utmost of which humanity is capable, the Will to open the portals to the spiritual attainment to my fellow men and bring them to the enjoyment of that realization of Truth beneath all veils of temporal falsehood; which had enlightened mine eyes and filled my mouth with song.

LIBER CLVII  
THE TAO TEH KING

*translated from the Codex manifested in the Akasha  
by 729 the Wizard Amalantrah  
to  
666  
with a commentary by 666*

If any sinologists object to anything in this translation, let him go absorb his Yang in his own Yin, as the Americans say, and give me credit for an original Masterpiece. Whatever Lao Tze said or meant, this is what I say and mean. 666.

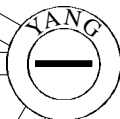
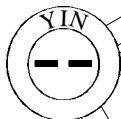
*Ko Yuen*  
*his translation*  
*and commentary*  
*made during his incarnation as*  
*Aleister Crowley*  
*during the Great Magical Retirement*  
*upon Aesopus Island*

*Anno XIV*

PART I

*The Principles of Tao*

TAO



# I

## *The Nature of the Tao*

### 1. The Tao-Path is not the All-Tao.

The Name is not the Thing named.

Tao hath for parallel Pleroma, Shiva, Jod, etc. Teh hath for parallel Logos, Sakti, He, etc. But the conception of Lao Tze unites all these at their highest. The best parallel is given in *Liber CCXX*, Chapters I and II, where Hadit is Tao and Nuit, Teh (yet these are in certain aspects interchanged.) The point of this paragraph is to make discrimination or definition, not to assert the superiority of either conception. The illusion of any such preference would depend on the grade of initiation of a student. A Magus  $9^{\circ}=2^{\circ}$  of A.:A.: would doubtless esteem the Path of "Becoming" as his Absolute, for the law of his Grade is Change (see *Liber B vel Magi sub Figura I*). But who knows? As Ipsissimus  $10^{\circ}=1^{\circ}$  might find a conception to transcend even this. For instance, one might interpret this first paragraph as saying that Becoming is not Tao, but that Tao is a Being whose nature is Becoming. Matter and Motion cannot exist separately. The reader should regard every verse of this Book as a text worth of the most intense and prolonged meditation. He will not understand the Book thoroughly until he has wrought his mind into its proper shape in the great Forge of Samadhi.

### 2. Unmanifested, it is the Secret Father of Heaven (☰) and Earth (☷). Manifested, it is their Mother.

This doctrine is the initiated teaching to hint at which priests invented legends of parthenogenesis.

### 3. To understand this Mystery, one must be fulfilling one's will, and if one is not thus free, one will but gain a smattering of it.

In a moral state, therefore, without desire, frictionless.

### 4. The Tao is one, and the Teh but a Phase thereof. The abyss of this Mystery is the Portal of Serpent-Wonder.

Cf. *Berashith* for the identity of the phases of "0<sup>0</sup>" and "something." Serpent-Wonder refers to the Magical Force called Kundalini.

## II

# *The Energy—Source of the Self*

1. All men know that beauty and ugliness are correlative, as are skill and clumsiness; one implies and suggests the other.
2. So also existence and non-existence pose the one the other;<sup>1</sup> so also is it with ease and difficulty; length and shortness; height and lowness. Also Musick exists through harmony of opposites;<sup>2</sup> time and space depend upon contraposition.

This shows how the Tao realizes itself through its projection in correlative phases, expressing 0 as + 1 + (-1); to speak like a Qabalist or an electrician.

3. By the use of this method, the sage can fulfill his will without action, and utter his word without speech.

Our activity is due to the incompleteness of the summing up of Forces. Thus a man proceeds to walk East at four miles an hour, though he is already traveling in that direction at over 1,000 miles an hour. The end of the Meditation on Action is the realization of Hadit; wherefore any action would be a disturbance of that perfection. This being understood of the True Self, the mind and body proceed untrammelled in their natural path without desire on the part of the self.

4. All things arise without diffidence; they grow, and none interferes; they change according to their natural order, without lust of result. The work is accomplished; yet continueth in its orbit, without goal. This work is done unconsciously; this is why its energy is indefatigable.

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1: I.e., the thought of either implies its opposite.

2: (nay, even)



### III

## *Quieting Folk*

1. To reward merit is to stir up emulation; to prize rarities is to encourage robbery; to display desirable things is to excite the disorder of covetousness.
2. Therefore, the sage governeth men by keeping their minds and their bodies at rest, contenting the one by emptiness, the other by fullness. He satisfieth their desires, thus fulfilling their wills, and making them frictionless; and he maketh them strong in body, to a similar end.
3. He delivereth them from the restlessness of knowledge and the cravings of discontent. As to those who have knowledge already, he teacheth them the way of non-action. This being assured, there is no disorder in the world.

A lecture on the labour problem.

## IV

# *The Spring without Source*

1. The Tao resembleth the Emptiness of Space; to employ it, we must avoid creating ganglia. Oh Tao, how vast art Thou, the Abyss of Abysses, thou Holy and Secret Father of all Fatherhoods of Things!

See Liber CCXX, I.22, "let there be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing." Inequality (an Illusion) and disorder necessarily result from the departure from homogeneity.

2. Let us make our sharpness blunt;<sup>1</sup> let us loosen our complexes;<sup>2</sup> let us tone down our brightness to the general obscurity.<sup>3</sup> Oh Tao, how still art Thou, how pure, continuous One beyond Heaven!
3. This Tao hath no Father; it is beyond all other conceptions, higher than the highest.

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1: For Sharpness implies a concentration.

2: For these are the ganglia of thought, which must be destroyed.

3: On the same principles, *cf.* the Doctrine in *Liber AL vel Legis sub figura CCXX, The Book of The Law*, as to the "spacemarks," the stars are blemishes, so to speak, on the continuity of Nuit.

## The Formula of the Vacuum

1. Heaven and earth proceed without motive, but casually, in their order of nature, dealing with all things carelessly, like used talismans. So also the sages deal with their people, not exercising benevolence, but allowing the nature of all to move without friction.
2. The Space between heaven and earth<sup>1</sup> is their breathing apparatus.<sup>2</sup> Exhalation is not exhaustion, but the complement of Inhalation, and this equally of that. Speech<sup>3</sup> exhausteth; guard thyself, therefore, maintaining the perfect freedom of thy nature.

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1: I.e., the six trigrams between ☰ and ☷.

2: And so these must not be interfered with.

3: By interfering with this regular order of breathing.

References to the trigrams of the Yi King must be explained by that Book. It would be impossible to elucidate such passages in a note. Ko Yuen is now at work to prepare an edition of the Yi.\*

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\* Crowley did in fact complete a verse-paraphrase of the hexagrams, and wrote a number of commentaries on the *I Ching*. His versifications of the hexagrams with a brief introduction was published as *Equinox* III (7), *Shi Yi*, in 1971 by H.P. Smith's Thelema Publications. The commentaries were omitted from this edition, although many are still extant. — T.S.

## VI

# *The Perfection of Form*

- I. The Teh is the immortal energy of the Tao, its feminine aspect. Heaven and Earth issued from her Gate; this Gate is the root of their World-Sycamore. Its operation is of pure Joy and Love, and faileth never.

*Cf.* in *Liber Aleph vel CXI*, The Book of Wisdom or Folly, the doctrine of “The Play of Nuit.”

## VII

# *The Concealment of the Light*

1. Heaven and Earth are mighty in continuance, because their work is delivered from the lust of result.
2. Thus also the sage, seeking not any goal, attaineth all things; he doth not interfere in the affairs of his body, and so that body acteth without friction. It is because he meddleth not with personal aims that these come to pass with simplicity.

See the Book of The Law as to “lust of result.” The general idea of the Way of the Tao is that all evil is interference. It is unnatural action which is error. Non-action is commendable only as a corrective of such; to interfere with one's own true Way is Restriction, the word of Sin.

## VIII

# *The Nature of Peace*

1. Admire thou the High Way of Water! Is not Water the soul of the life of things, whereby they change? Yet it seeketh its level, and abideth content in obscurity. So also it resembleth the Tao, in this Way thereof!

Hydrogen and chlorine (for example) will not unite when properly dry. Dryness is immobility or death. (*Cf.* Liber Aleph vel CXI, The Book of Wisdom or Folly, the doctrine concerning Change.)

2. The virtue of a house is to be well-placed; of the mind, to be at ease in silence as of space; of societies, to be will-disposed; of governments, to maintain quietude; of work, to be skillfully performed; and of all motion, to be made at the right time.

In all these illustrations, Lao Tze deprecates restlessness or friction.

3. Also it is the virtue of a man to abide in his place without discontent; thus offendeth he no man.

This gives point to the previous paragraph. It is all another way of saying "Do what thou wilt."

## IX

# *The Way of Reticence*

1. Fill not a vessel, lest it spill in carrying. Meddle not with a sharpened point by feeling it constantly, or it will soon become blunted.

Moderation. Let well alone.

2. Gold and jade endanger the house of their possessor. Wealth and honors lead to arrogance and envy, and bring ruin. Is thy way famous and thy name becoming distinguished? Withdraw, thy work once done, into obscurity; this is the way of Heaven.

Attend to the work; ignore the byproducts thereof.

## X

# *Things Attainable*

1. When soul<sup>1</sup> and body<sup>2</sup> are in the bond of love, they can be kept together. By concentration on the breath<sup>3</sup> it is brought to perfect elasticity, and one becomes as a babe. By purifying oneself from Samadhi one becomes whole.

Here we see once more the doctrine of being without friction. Internal conflict leads to rupture. Again, one's Pranayama is to result in perfect pliability and exact adjustment to one's environment. Finally, even Sammasamadhi is a defect, so long as it is an experience instead of a constant state. So long as there are two to become one, there are two.

2. In his dealing with individuals and with society, let him move without lust of result. In the management of his breath, let him be like the mother-bird.<sup>4</sup> Let his intelligence<sup>5</sup> comprehend every quarter; but let his knowledge<sup>6</sup> cease.
3. Here is the Mystery of Virtue.<sup>7</sup> It createth all and nourisheth all; yet it doth not adhere to them; it operateth all, but knoweth not of it, nor proclaimeth it; it directeth all, but without conscious control.

He must absorb (or understand) everything without conscious knowledge, which is a shock, implying duality, like flint and steel, while understanding is like a sponge, or even like ocean absorbing rivers.

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1: Neschamah.

2: Nepesch.

3: Prana.

4: I.e., brooding like the Spirit, quiet, without effort. There is also reference to a certain Legend, known in the Sanctuary of the Gnosis.

5: Binah

6: Daath.

7: Of the Tao and of him that hath it. Virtue – the Teh.



## XI

# *The Value of the Unexpressed*

- I. The thirty spokes join in their nave, that is one; yet the wheel dependeth for use upon the hollow place for the axle. Clay is shapen to make vessels; but the contained space is what is useful. Matter is therefore of use only to make the limits of the space which is the thing of real value.

This introduces the doctrine of the Fourth Dimension. Matter is like the lines bounding a plane. The plane is the real thing, the lines infinitely small in comparison, and serving only to define it. So also the "Self" is an imaginary limit marking off the divisions of the "Body of God." The error of Ahankara (the ego-making faculty) is to take the illusory surface for the Sphere. *Cf. The Book of The Law* concerning the Nature of Nuit.

## XII

# *The Withdrawal from the External*

1. The five colors film over sight; The five sounds make hearing dull; The five flavors conceal taste; occupation with motion and action bedevil Mind; even as the esteem of rare things begetteth covetousness and disorder.

This is the regular Yogi doctrine, and may be tested by experience of various Shivanas and other proper concentrations. But Lao Tze draws a parallel for social or political use. To excite cupidity leads to theft at home, and war abroad. It is only too evident today how neglect of this rule has destroyed civilization; I need not insist on examples of how A's potash, B's iron, C's coal and D's trade routes have caused E to set the world ablaze.

2. The wise man seeketh therefore to content the actual needs of the people, not to excite them by the sight of luxuries. He banneth these, and concentrateth on those.

The present labour troubles are due to the absurd cult of material complexities miscalled prosperity.

## XIII

# *The Contempt for Circumstance*

1. Favour and disgrace are equally to be shunned; honour and calamity to be alike regarded as adhering to the personality.<sup>1</sup>

And, therefore, “ganglia” to be loosened, as stated above.

2. What is this which is written concerning favour and disgrace? Disgrace is the fall from favour. He then that hath favour hath fear, and its loss begetteth fear yet greater of a further fall. What is this which is written concerning honour and calamity? It is this attachment to the body which maketh calamity possible; for were one bodiless, what evil could befall him?
3. Therefore let him that regardeth himself rightly administer also a kingdom; and let him govern it who loveth it as another man loveth himself.

This does not mean with extreme devotion, but rather with passionless indifference.

## XIV

# *The Shewing-Forth of the Mystery*

1. We look at it, and see it not, though it is Omnipresent; and we name it the Root-Balance.<sup>1</sup>  
We listen for it, and hear it not, though it is Omniscient; and we name it the Silence.<sup>2</sup>  
We feel for it, and touch it not, though it is Omnipotent; and we name it the Concealed.<sup>3</sup>  
These three Virtues hath it, yet we cannot describe it as consisting of them; but, mingling them aright, we apprehend the One.
2. Above, it shineth not; below, it is not dark. It moveth all continuously, with out Expression, returning into Naught. It is the Form of That which is beyond Form; it is the Image of the Invisible; it is Change, and Without Limit.<sup>4</sup>
3. We confront it, and see not its Face; we pursue it, and its Back is hidden from us. Ah! but apply the Tao as in old Time to the work of the present; know it as it was known in the beginning; follow fervently the Thread of the Tao.

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1: Hadit, the root of Yod.

2: Nuit, the root of Hé.

3: Ra-Hoor-Khuit, Kether, the root of Vau.

4: Cf. Ain, Ain Soph, Ain Soph Aur. Also see *Liber Aleph vel CXI, The Book of Wisdom or Folly*.

## *The Appearance of the True Nature*

1. The adepts of past ages were subtle and keen to apprehend this Mystery, and their profundity was obscurity unto men. Since then they were not known, let me declare their nature.
2. To all seeming, they were fearful as men that cross a torrent in winter flood; they were hesitating like a man in apprehension of them that are about him; they were full of awe like a guest in a great house; they were ready to disappear like ice in thaw; they were unassuming like unworked wood; they were empty as a valley; and dull as the waters of a marsh.
3. Who can clear muddy water? Stillness will accomplish this. Who can obtain rest? Let motion continue equably, and it will itself be peace.
4. The adepts of the Tao, conserving its way, seek not to be actively self-conscious. By their emptiness of<sup>1</sup> Self they have no need to show their youth and perfection; to appear old and imperfect is their privilege.

---

1: (the ganglion of)

## XVI

# *The Withdrawal to the Root*

1. Emptiness must be perfect, and Silence made absolute with tireless strength. All things pass through the period of action; then they return to repose. They grow, bud, blossom and fruit; then they return to the root. This return to the root is this state which we name Silence; and this Silence is Witness of their Fulfilment.
2. This cycle is the universal law. To know<sup>1</sup> it is the part of intelligence; to ignore it<sup>2</sup> bringeth folly of action, whereof the end is madness. To know it bringeth understanding and peace; and these lead to the identification of the Self wit the Not-Self. This identification maketh man a king; and this kingliness groweth unto godhood. That godhood beareth fruit in the mastery of the Tao. Then the man, the Tao permeating him, endureth; and his bodily principles are in harmony, proof against<sup>3</sup> decay, until the hour of his Change.

---

1: And acquiescence in.

2: Or to rebel against it.

3: (disorder and)

## XVII

# *The Purity of the Current*

1. In the Age of Gold, the people were not conscious of their rulers; in the Age of Silver, they loved them with songs; in the Age of Brass, they feared them; in the Age of Iron, they despised them. As the rulers<sup>1</sup> lost confidence, so also did the people lose confidence in them.
2. How hesitating did they seem, the Lords of the Age of Gold, speaking with deliberation, aware of the weight of their word! Thus they accomplished all things with success; and the people deemed their well-being to be the natural course of events.

---

1: Becoming self-conscious.

## XVIII

# *The Decay of Manners*

1. When men abandoned the Way of the Tao, benevolence and justice became necessary. Then also was need of wisdom and cunning, and all fell into illusion. When harmony ceased to prevail in the six spheres<sup>1</sup> it was needful to govern them by manifesting Sons.<sup>2</sup> When the kingdoms and races<sup>3</sup> became<sup>4</sup> confused, loyal ministers<sup>5</sup> had to appear.

It is hard at first for the student to grasp the disdain of Lao Tze for what we call good qualities. But the need for the “good” is created by the existence of “evil,” i.e., the restriction of anything from doing its own will without friction. Good is then merely a symptom of evil, and so itself a poison. A man who finds Mercury and Potassium Iodide “good” for him, is a sick man. Frictionless Nourishment is the order of Change, or Life.

---

1: The solar system.

2: Dhyana-buddhas.

3: Elements, signs, etc.

4: (self-conscious and therefore)

5: Archangels.



## XIX

# *Returning to the Purity of the Current*

1. If we forget our statesmanship and our wisdom, it would be an hundred times better for the people. If we forget our benevolence and our justice, they would become again like sons, folk of good will. If we forget our machines and our business, there would be no knavery.

Samuel Butler in *Erewhon* describes a people who had sense enough to forbid all machinery. Wells, in *The War in the Air* prophesies the results of not doing so. At the hour of writing, An XV ☉ in ♀, we are facing the fulfilment of most of this prophecy. And still we make haste to arm!

2. These new methods despised the olden Way, inventing fine names to disguise their barrenness. But simplicity in the doing of the will of every man would put an end to vain ambitions and desires.

## *The Withdrawal from the Common Way*

1. To forget learning is to end trouble. The smallest difference in words, such as “yes” and “yea” can make endless controversy for the scholar.<sup>1</sup> Fearful indeed is death, since all men fear it; but the abyss of questionings shoreless and bottomless, is worse!
2. Consider the profane man, how he preeneth, as if at feast, or gazing upon Spring from a tower! But as for me, I am as one who yawneeth, without any trace of desire. I am like a babe before its first smile. I appear sad and forlorn, like a man homeless. The profane man hath no definite shape. The profane man looketh lively and keen-witted; I alone appear blank in my mind. They seem eagerly critical; I appear careless and without perception. I seem to be as one adrift upon the sea, with no thought of an harbour. The profane have each one his definite course of action; I alone appear useless and uncomprehending, like a man from the border. Yea, thus I differ from all other men: but my jewel is the All-Mother!

*Cf.* “Afloat in the aether, O my God, my God!” *Liber VII*. It is the “aimless winging” which gives “joy ineffable” to the self-supported Absolute.

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1: Consider the “homoousios-homoiousios” quarrel of early Christianity.\*

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\* “Homo-ousios” (*Grk.* “of the same essence”) is a technical term used in the Nicene Creed to express the relationship between the Son and the Father in the Christian Trinity. “Homoi-ousios”, approx. “of similar essence” was proposed as a compromise between this and the position of the Arian faction which held the Son to be created by, subordinate to, and of different essence to, the Father. It is possible that the slogan “not one iota more” was first raised by adherents of the Nicene orthodoxy in rejection of the “Homoiousian” position (later condemned as the “semi-Arian heresy”). If the extra letter is represented by an iota subscript the two words become virtually indistinguishable. — T.S.

## XXI

# *The Infinite Womb*

- I. The sole source of energy<sup>1</sup> is the Tao. Who may declare its nature? It is beyond Sense, yet all form is hidden within it. It is beyond Sense, yet all Perceptibles are hidden within it. It is beyond Sense, yet all Being is hidden within it. This Being excites Perception, and the Word thereof. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, its Name<sup>2</sup> operateth continuously, causing all to flow in the cycle of Change, which is Love and Beauty. How do I know this? By my comprehension of the Tao.

Zero contains all possibilities, for it may be written  $0=X$  plus  $(-X)$ , where  $X$  is anything soever and  $-X$  its opposite. However complex  $X$  may be, it is always to be cancelled by its  $-X$ . Thus the universe is always potentially anything and everything, yet actually Nothing.

---

1: (and matter)

2: Teh.

## *The Guerdon of Modesty*

1. The part becometh the whole. The curve becometh straight; the void becometh full; the old becometh new. He who desireth little accomplisheth his Will with ease; who desireth many things becometh distracted.<sup>1</sup>
2. Therefore, the sage concentrateth upon one Will, and it is as light to the whole world. Hiding himself, he shineth; withdrawing himself, he attracteth notice; humbling himself, he is exalted; dissatisfied with himself,<sup>2</sup> he gaineth force to achieve his Will. Because he striveth not, no man may contend against him.
3. That is no idle say of the men of old; “The part becometh the whole”; it is the Canon of Perfection.

Any part X becomes the whole Zero, by cancelling itself through “love” of -X.

---

1: Thus he hath none of them.

2: Since the one Will is not yet attained.

## XXIII

# *The Void of Naught*

1. To keep silence is the mark of one who is acting in full accordance with his Will. A fierce wind soon falleth; a storm-shower doth not last all day. Yet Heaven and Earth cause these; and if they fail to make violence continue, how much less can man abide in spasm of passion!
2. With him that devoteth him to Tao, the devotees of Tao are in accord; so also are the devotees of Teh,<sup>1</sup> yea, even they who fail in seeking these are in accord.<sup>2</sup>
3. So then his brothers in the Tao are joyful, attaining it; and his brothers in the Teh are joyful, attaining it; and they who fail in seeking these are joyful, partaking of it. But if he himself realize not the Tao with calm of confidence, then they also appear lacking in confidence.

He who has Tao has all things rightly disposed; his own failure creates the illusion of general failure.

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1: Because Teh is part of Tao.

2: Because to him who has Tao all things are realized as harmonious.

## XXIV

### *Evil Manners*

- I. He who standeth a-tiptoe standeth not firm; he who maketh rigid his legs walketh ill. He who preeneth himself shineth not; he who talketh positively is vulgar; he who boastheth is refused acceptance; he who is wise in his own conceit is thought inferior. Such attitudes, to him that hath the view given by understanding the Tao, seem like garbage or like cancer, abhorrent to all. They then who follow the Way<sup>1</sup> do not admit them.

---

1: Tao.

XXV

*Images of the Mystery*

1. Without Limit and Perfect, there is a Becoming, beyond Heaven and Earth. It hath not motion nor Form; it is alone, it changeth not;<sup>1</sup> it extendeth all ways; it hath no adversary. It is like the All-Mother.<sup>2</sup>
2. I know not its Name, but I call it the Tao. Moreover, I exert myself, and call it Vastness.
3. Vastness, the Becoming! Becoming, it flieth afar. Afar, it draweth near. Vast is this Tao; Heaven also is Vast. Earth is vast; and the Holy King is vast also.<sup>2</sup> In the Universe are Four Vastnesses, and of these is the Holy King.
4. Man followeth the<sup>4</sup> formula of Earth; Earth followeth that of Heaven, and Heaven that of the Tao. The formula of the Tao is its own Nature.

---

1: Because it comprehendeth Change.

2: Nuit.

3: For they conform to the Tao.

4: (Magick)

## XXVI

# *The Nature of Mass*

1. Mass is the fulcrum of mobility; stillness is the father of motion.
2. Therefore the sage King, though he travel afar, remaineth near his supplies. Though opportunity tempt him, he remaineth quietly in proper disposition, indifferent. Should the master of an host of chariots bear himself frivolously? If he attack without support, he loseth his base; if he becomes a raider, he forfeiteth his throne.

This is all obvious military metaphor. If we depart from the Tao, we become engaged in futile activities which lead nowhere and we find ourselves in the Abyss of Choronzon.



## XXVII

### *Skill in the Method*

1. The experienced traveler concealeth his tracks; the clever speaker giveth no chance to the critic; the skilled mathematician useth no abacus; the ingenious safesmith baffleth the burglar without the use of bolts, and the cunning binder without ropes and knots.<sup>1</sup> So also the sage, skilled in man-emancipation-craft, useth all men; understanding the value of everything, he rejecteth nothing. This is called the Occult Regimen.
2. The adept is then master to the zelator, and the zelator assisteth and honoreth the adept. Yet unless these relations were manifest, even the most intelligent observer might be perplexed as to which was which. This is called the Crown of Mystery.

The adept has become so absolutely natural that he appears unskillful. *Ars est celare artem.*<sup>\*</sup> It is only he who has started on the Path that can divine how sublime is the Master.

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1: The reference is to certain “puzzles,” as we should call them, common in China.

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<sup>\*</sup> [Lat. “The art is to hide the art.”]

## XXVIII

### *The Return to Simplicity*

1. Balance thy male strength with thy female weakness and thou shalt attract all things, as the ocean absorbeth all rivers; for thou shalt formulate the excellence of the Child eternal, simple, and perfect. Knowing the light, remain in the Dark. Manifest not thy Glory, but thine obscurity. Clothed in this Child-excellence eternal, thou hast attained the Return of the First State. Knowing the splendour of Fame, cling to Obloquy and Infamy; then shalt thou remain as in the Valley to which flow all waters, the lodestone to fascinate all men. Yea, they shall hail in thee this Excellence, eternal, simple and perfect, of the Child.
2. The raw material, wrought into form, produceth vessels.<sup>1</sup> So the sage King formulateth his Wholeness in divers Offices; and his Law is without violence or constraint.<sup>2</sup>

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1: Homogeneous developed into heterogeneous: 0<sup>0</sup> understood as “something.”

2: Being concordant with the nature of his people.

## XXIX

# *Refraining from Action*

1. He that, desiring a kingdom, exerteth himself to obtain it, will fail. A Kingdom is of the nature of spirit, and yieldeth not to activity. He who graspeth it, destroyeth it; he who gaineth it, loseth it.

The usurper merely seizes the throne; the people are not with him, as with one who becomes king by virtue of natural fitness. The usurper has but the mask of power.

2. The wheel of nature revolveth constantly; the last becometh first, and the first last; hot things grow cold, and cold things hot; weakness overcome strength; things gained are lost anon. Hence the wise man avoideth effort, desire and sloth.

Effort is the Rajas-Guna, and makes one go faster than is natural. Sloth is the Tamas-Guna, and makes one go slower than is natural. Desire is the disturbance of the Sattwa-Guna, exciting the lust of Change, in one direction or the other, from the natural. Things gained: see The Book of The Law, Chapter II vv. 57-60.

## XXX

# *A Warning Against War*

1. If a king summon to his aid a Master of the Tao, let him not advise recourse to arms. Such action certainly bringeth the corresponding reaction.
2. Where armies are, are weeds. Bad harvests follow great hosts.
3. The good general striketh decisively, once and for all. He does not risk<sup>1</sup> by overboldness. He striketh, but doth not vaunt his victory. He striketh according to strict law of necessity, not from desire of victory.

In other words, he acts according to the rules of the game, without losing his head by vain-glory, ambition or hatred.

4. Things become strong and ripe, then age. This is discord with the Tao;<sup>2</sup> and what is not at one with the Tao soon cometh to an end.

---

1: (counter-attack)

2: Forcing-on of strength, instead of allowing natural growth.

## XXXI

### *Composing Quarrel*

1. Arms, though they may be beautiful, are of ill omen, abominable to all created beings. They who have the Tao love not their use.
2. The place of honour is on the right is wartime; so thinketh the man of distinction. Sharp weapons are ill-omened, unworthy of such a man; he useth them only in necessity. He valueth peace and ease, desireth not violence of victory. To desire victory is to desire the death of men; and to desire that is to fail to propitiate the people.
3. At feasts, the left hand is the high seat; at funerals, the right. The second in command of the army leadeth the left wing, the commander-in-chief, the right wing; it is as if the battle were a rite of mourning! He that hath slain most men should weep for them most bitterly; so them the place of the victor is assigned to him with philosophical propriety.

XXXII

*The Wisdom of Teh*

1. The All-Tao<sup>1</sup> hath no name.
2. It is That Minute Point,<sup>2</sup> yet the whole world dare not contend against him that hath it. Did a lord or king gain it and guard it, all men would obey him of their own accord.
3. Heaven and Earth combining under its spell, shed forth dew, extending throughout all things of its own accord, without man's interference.

This “dew” refers to the Elixir of the Fraternity R.C. and of the O.T.O. It has been described, with proper caution, in various passages of *The Equinox* and of *The Book of Lies*.

4. Tao, in its phase of action, hath a name. Then men can comprehend it; when they do this, there is no more risk of wrong or ill-success.
5. As the great rivers and the oceans are to the valley streams, so is the Tao to the whole universe.

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1: Comprehending Change within itself.

2: Hadit.

### XXXIII

## *The Discrimination (Viveka) of Teh*

1. He who understandeth others understandeth Two; but he who understandeth himself understandeth One. He who conquereth others is strong; but he who conquereth himself is stronger yet.<sup>1</sup> Contentment is riches; and continuous action<sup>2</sup> is Will.
2. He that adapteth himself perfectly to his environment, continueth for long; he who dieth without dying, liveth forever.<sup>3</sup>

The last paragraph refers once more to a certain secret practice taught by the O.T.O. See, in particular, "The Book of Lies."

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1: For the same reason as in the first sentence.

2: (equable and carefree)

## XXXIV

### *The Method of Attainment*

1. The Tao is immanent; it extendeth to the right hand as to the left.
2. All things derive from it their being; it createth them, and all comply with it. Its work is done, and it proclaimeth it not. It is the ornament of all things, yet it claimeth not fief of them; there is nothing so small that it inhabiteth not, and informeth it. All things return without knowledge of the Cause thereof; there is nothing so great that it habiteth not, and informeth it.
3. In this manner also may the Sage perform his Works. It is by not thrusting himself forward that he winneth to his success.



XXXV

*The Good Will of the Teh*

1. The whole world is drawn to him that hath the Likeness of the Tao.<sup>1</sup> Men flock unto him and suffer no ill, but gain repose, find peace, enjoy all ease.
2. Sweet sounds and cates lure the traveler from his way. But the Word of the Tao, though it appear harsh and insipid, unworthy to hearken or to behold; hath his use all inexhaustible.

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1: I.e., the Teh.

## XXXVI

# *The Hiding of the Light*

1. In order to draw breath, first empty the lungs; to weaken another, first strengthen him; to overthrow another, first exalt him; to despoil another, first load him with gifts; this is called the Occult Regimen.
2. The soft conquereth the hard; the weak pulleth down the strong.
3. The fish that leaveth ocean is lost; the method of government must be concealed from the people.

The single argument that can be aduced in favour of an Enlightened Democracy is that it provides more completely for the fooling of the Sovereign People than any other known system.

XXXVII

*The Right Use of Government*

1. The Tao proceedeth by its own nature, doing nothing; therefore there is no doing which it comprehendeth not.
2. If kings and princes were to govern in this manner, all things would operate aright by their own motion.
3. If this transmutation were my object, I should call it Simplicity. Simplicity hath no name nor purpose; silently and at ease all things go well.



PART II

*The Application of Tao*



## XXXVIII

### *Concerning the Teh*

1. Those who possessed perfectly the powers<sup>1</sup> did not manifest them, and so they preserved them. Those who possessed them imperfectly feared to lose them, and so lost them.
2. The former did nothing, nor had need to do. The latter did, and had need to do.
3. Those who possessed benevolence exercised it, and had need it; so also was it with them who possessed justice.
4. Those who possessed the conventions displayed them; and when men would not agree, they made ready to fight them.

Teh appears as Chokmah-Binah, Benevolence as Chesed, Justice as Geburah, Convention as Tiphereth. Thus Kether alone is “safe”; even Chokmah-Binah risks fall unless it keeps Silence.

5. Thus, when the Tao was lost, the Magick Powers appeared; then, by successive degradations, came Benevolence, Justice, Convention.
6. Now convention is the shadow of loyalty and good will, and so the herald of disorder. Yea, even Understanding is but a Blossom of the Tao, and foreshadoweth Stupidity.

This repeats the doctrine of the danger of Binah. The attack on Tiphereth is to be regarded as a reference to the “Fall,” death of Hiram at high noon, etc.

7. So then the Tao-Man holdeth to Mass, and avoideth Motion; he is attached to the Root, not to the flower. He leaveth the one, and cleaveth to the other.

That is, if his road be towards the Tao. In our language, he adores Nuit; but the Perfect Man, when he needs to manifest, is on the opposite curve. Cf. *The Book Of Lies*: “The Brothers of A.:A.: are Women: the Aspirants to A.:A.: are Men.”

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1: Teh.

## XXXIX

# *The Law of the Beginning*

1. These things have possessed the Tao from the beginning; Heaven, clear and shining; Earth, steady and easy; Spirits, mighty in Magick; Vehicles, overflowing with Joy; all that hath life; and the rulers of men. All these derive their essence from the Tao.

“Spirits” and “Vehicles” refer to the Lance and Cup, correlatives of Heaven and Earth.

2. Without the Tao, Heaven would dissolve, Earth disrupt; Spirits become impotent; Vehicles empty; living things would perish and rulers lose their power.
3. The root of grandeur is humility, and the strength of exaltation is its base. Thus rulers speak of themselves as “Fatherless,” “Virtueless,” “Unworthy,” proclaiming by this that their Glory is their shame.<sup>1</sup> So also the virtue of a Chariot is not any of the parts of a Chariot, if they be numbered.<sup>2</sup> They do not seek to appear fine like jade, but inconspicuous like common stone.

English good manners are similarly inconspicuous, and were so devised as a protection. Jade is liable to be seized and carved; ordinary stone may escape. Cf. Kwang-tze on the rotten tree, *etc.* *Zan Kien Shieh*, Sacred Books of the East, No. XXXIX, p. 217.\*

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1: It is the invisible that is all-important: See Chapter II.

2: Cf. *The Questions of King Milinda*, where is the discussion of what a carriage really is.

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\* “... the material of it is good for nothing, and hence it is that it has attained to so great an age.”



## XL

# *Omitting Utility*

1. The Tao proceeds by correlative curves, and its might is in weakness.
2. All things arose from the Teh, and the Teh budded from the Tao.

The law of the Tao is constant compensation; its method is always to redress the balance, and reduce the equation to zero. In its action it resembles very closely the form of Energy which we call gravitation; it is an inertia always tending to minimize stress.

## XLI

# *The Identity of the Differential*

1. The best students, learning of the Tao, set to work earnestly to practice the Way. Mediocre students now cherish it, now let it go.
2. Thus spake the makers of Saws: the Tao at its brightest is obscure. Who advanceth in that Way, retireth. Its smooth Way is rough. Its summit is a Valley. Its beauty is ugliness; its wealth is poverty. Its virtue, vice. Its stability is vacancy. Its utterance is silence. Its reality is illusion.
3. Nameless and imperceptible is the Tao; but it informeth and perfecteth all things.

## XLII

# *The Veils of the Tao*

1. The Tao formulated the One.<sup>1</sup>  
The One exhaled the Two.<sup>2</sup>  
The Two were parents of the Three.<sup>3</sup>  
The Three were parents of all things.<sup>4</sup>  
All things pass from Obscurity to Manifestation, inspired harmoniously by the Breath of the Void.<sup>5</sup>
2. Men do not like to be fatherless, virtueless, unworthy: yet rulers describe themselves by these names. Thus increase bringeth decrease to some, and decrease to others.
3. Others have taught thus; I consent to it. Violent man and strong die not by natural death. This fact is the foundation of my law.

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1: Kether or the Æthyr.\*

2: Chokmah-Binah or Yin and Yang.

3: The second Triad.

4: The third Triad and Malkuth.

5: The Tao.

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\* *v.l.* "the First Æthyr" (see *The Vision and the Voice*). I am not sure which is correct. — T.S.

## XLIII

### *The Cosmic Method*

- I. The softest substance<sup>1</sup> hunteth down the hardest:<sup>2</sup> the unsubstantial<sup>3</sup> penetrateth where there is no opening. Here is the Virtue of Inertia.
2. Few are they who attain: whose speech is Silence, whose Work is Inertia.

---

1: Water-Yoni.

2: Rock-Lingam.

3: The Luminiferous Æther.

XLIV

*Monitorial*

1. What shall it profit a man if he gain fame or wealth, and lose his life?
2. If a man cling to fame or wealth, he risketh what is worth more.
3. Be content, not fearing disgrace. Act not, and risk not criticism. Thus live thou long, without alarm.

XLV

*The Overflowing of Teh*

1. Despise thy masterpieces; thus renew the vigor of thy creation. Deem thy fullness emptiness; thus shall thy fullness never be empty. Let the straight appear crooked to thee, thy Craft clumsiness; thy Musick discord.
2. Exercise moderateth cold; stillness heat. To be pure<sup>1</sup> and to keep silence, is the True Law of all that are beneath Heaven.

See also the *Khing Kang King*, Liber XXI.\*

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1: Brahmacharya – Chastity in the secret Parzifal - O.T.O. sense.

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\* [Appended to the present volume.]

XLVI

*The Withdrawal from Ambition*

1. When the Tao beareth away on Earth, men put swift horses to night-carts. When it is neglected, they breed chargers in the border marches.
2. There is no evil worse than ambition; no misery worse than discontent; no crime greater than greed. Content of mind is peace and satisfaction eternal.

## XLVII

### *The Vision of the Distant*

1. One need not pass his threshold to comprehend all that is under Heaven, not to look out from his lattice to behold the Tao Celestial. Nay! but the farther a man goeth, the less he knoweth.
2. The sages acquired their knowledge without travel; they named all things aright without beholding them; and, acting without aim, fulfilled their Wills.



## XLVIII

# *Oblivion Overcoming Knowledge*

1. The scholar seeketh daily increase of knowing; the sage of Tao daily decrease of doing.
2. He decreaseth it, again and again, until he doeth no act with the lust of result. Having attained this Inertia all accomplisheth itself.
3. He who attracteth to himself all that is under Heaven doeth so without effort. He who maketh effort is not able to attract it.

## XLIX

### *The Adaptability of the Teh*

1. The wise man hath no fixed principle; he adapteth his mind to his environment.
2. To the good I am good, and to the evil I am good also; thus all become good. To the true I am true, and to the false I am true; thus all become true.
3. The sage appeareth hesitating to the world, because his mind is detached. Therefore the people look and listen to him as his children; and thus doth he shepherd them.

## L

# *The Estimation of Life*

1. Man cometh into life, and returneth again into death.
2. Three men in ten conserve life; three men in ten pursue death.
3. Three men also in ten desire to live, but their acts hasten their journey to the house of death. Why is this? Because of their efforts to preserve life.
4. But this I have heard. He that is wise in the economy of his life, whereof he is warden for a season, journeyeth with no need to avoid the tiger or the rhinoceros, and goeth uncorseted among the warriors with no fear of sword or lance. The rhinoceros findeth in him no place vulnerable to its horn, the tiger to its claws, the weapon to its point. Why is this? Because there is no house of death in his whole body.

## LI

# *The Teh as the Nurse*

1. All things proceed from the Tao, and are sustained by its forth-flowing virtue.<sup>1</sup> Everyone taketh form according to his nature, and is perfect, each in his own particular way. Therefore, each and every one of them glorify the Tao, and worship its forth-flowing Virtue.
2. This glorifying of the Tao, this worship of the Teh, is constantly spontaneous, and not by appointment of Law.
3. Thus the Tao buddeth them out, nutureth them, developeth them, sustaineth them, perfecteth them, ripeneth them, upholdeth them, and reabsorbeth them.
4. It buddeth them forth, and claimeth not lordship over them; is overseer of their changes, and boasteth not of his puissance; perfecteth them, and interfereth not with their Ways; this is called the Mystery of its Virtue.

---

1: The Teh.

## LII

# *The Withdrawal into the Silence*

1. The Tao buddeth forth all things under Heaven; it is<sup>1</sup> the Mother of all.
2. Knowing the Mother, we may know her offspring. He that knoweth his Mother, and abideth in Her nature, remaineth in surety all his days.
3. With the mouth closed, and the Gates of Breath<sup>2</sup> controlled, he remaineth at ease all his days. With the mouth open, and the Breath<sup>2</sup> directed to outward affairs, he hath no surety all his days.
4. To perceive that Minute Point<sup>3</sup> is True Vision; to maintain the Soft and Gentle<sup>4</sup> is True Strength.
5. Employing harmoniously the Light Within<sup>5</sup> so that it returneth to its Origin, one guardeth even one's body from evil, and keepeth Silence before all men.

Paragraphs 3-5 refer to certain technical practices which may be studied in *Book 4, The Equinox* and *The Book Of The Law*.

---

1: (in its manifestation as the Teh)

2: Prana.

3: Hadit.

4: Nuit.

5: Ra-Hoor-Khuit.

## LIII

# *The Witness of Greed*

1. Were I discovered by men, and charged with government, my first would be lest I should become proud.
2. The true Path is level and smooth; but men love bypaths.
3. They adorn their courts, but they neglect their fields; and leave their storehouses empty. They wear elaborate and embroidered robes; they gird themselves with sharp swords; they eat and drink with luxury; they heap up goods; they are thievish and vainglorious. All this is opposite to the Way of Tao.

## *The Witness of Wisdom*

1. If a man plant according to the Tao it will never be uprooted; if he thus gather, it will never be lost. His sons and his son's, one following another, shall honour the shrine of their ancestor.
2. The Tao, applied to oneself, strengtheneth the Body,<sup>1</sup> to the family, bringeth wealth;<sup>1</sup> to the district, prosperity;<sup>1</sup> to the state, great fortune.<sup>1</sup> Let it be the Law of the Kingdom, and all men will increase in virtue.<sup>1</sup>

Teh is always the Magick Power; it need not be explained diversely as in the text.

3. Thus we observe its effect in every case, as to the person, the family, the district, the state and the kingdom.
4. How do I know that this is thus universal under Heaven?  
By experience.

---

1: Teh.

## *The Spell of the Mystery*

1. He that hath the Magick powers<sup>1</sup> of the Tao is like a young child. Insects will not sting him or beasts or birds of prey attack him.
2. The young child's bones are tender and its sinews are elastic, but its grasp is firm.<sup>2</sup> It knoweth nothing of the Union of Man and Woman, yet its organ may be excited. This is because of its natural perfection. It will cry all day long without becoming hoarse, because of the harmony of its being.
3. He who understandeth this harmony knoweth the mystery of the Tao, and becometh a True Sage. All devices for inflaming life, and increasing the vital Breath,<sup>3</sup> by mental effort<sup>4</sup> are evil and factitious.
4. Things become strong, then age. This<sup>5</sup> is in discord with the Tao, and what is not at one with the Tao soon cometh to an end.

---

1: Teh.

2: A baby can hang from a bough for quite an indefinitely long period. This is because of monkey-atavism; in other words, it is the subconscious of the child that is at work. This subconsciousness is of its true nature, therefore, in accord with the Tao.

3: Prana.

4: Hatha-Yoga, etc.

5: Forcing-on of strength instead of allowing natural growth.



## *The Excellence of the Mystery*

1. Who knoweth the Tao keepeth Silence. He who babbleth knoweth is not.

This is rather amusing, from one who has been speaking of it without intermission for so many pages. Strive as I will, I can find no excuse for the stupidity of this Utterance. The deeper I dive into Metaphysick, the more absurd I (or my author) seem. However, one ignorant folly more or less can make little difference on this planet.

2. Who knoweth it closeth his mouth and controlleth the Gates of his Breath.<sup>1</sup> He will make his sharpness blunt; he will loosen his complexes; he will tone down his brightness to the general obscurity. This is called the Secret of Harmony.
3. He cannot be insulted either by familiarity or aversion. He is immune to ideas of gain or loss, of honour or disgrace; he is the true man, unequalled under Heaven.

One may compare the character of Prince Muishkin in *The Idiot* of Dostoevski.

---

1: Prana.

LVII

*The True Influence*

1. One may govern a state by restriction; weapons may be used with skill and cunning; but one acquireth true command only by freedom, given and taken.
2. How am I aware of this? By experience that to multiply restrictive laws in the kingdom impoverisheth the people; the use of machines causeth disorder in state and race alike. The more men use skill and cunning, the more machines there are; and the more laws there are, the more felons there are.
3. A wise man has said this: I will refrain from doing, and the people will act rightly of their own accord; I will love Silence, and the people will instinctively turn to perfection; I will take no measures, and the people will enjoy true wealth; I will restrain ambition, and the people will attain simplicity.

The United States of America had this idea once, long ago. Therefore they prospered. But now?

## LVIII

# *Adaptation to Environment*

1. The government which exerciseth the least care serveth the people best; that which meddleth with everybody's business worketh all manner of harm. Sorrow and joy are bedfellows; who can divine the final result of either?
2. Shall we avoid restriction? Yea; restriction distorteth nature, so that even what seemeth good in it is evil. For how long have men suffered from misunderstanding of this.
3. The wise man is foursquare, and avoids aggression; his corners do not injure others. He moves in a straight line<sup>1</sup> and turns not aside therefrom; he is brilliant<sup>2</sup> but does not blind with his brightness.<sup>3</sup>

---

1: According to his Will.

2: Like a Star.

3: Because he keeps to his own orbit.

## LIX

# *Warding the Tao*

1. To balance our earthly nature and cultivate our heavenly nature, tread the Middle Path.
2. This Middle Path alone leadeth to the Timely Return to the True Nature. This Timely Return resulteth from the constant gathering of Magick Powers.<sup>1</sup> With that Gathering cometh control. This Control we know to be without Limit<sup>2</sup> and he who knoweth the Limitless may rule the state.
3. He who possesseth the Tao continueth long. He is like a plant with well-set roots and strong stems. Thus it secureth long continuance of its life.

---

1: Teh.

2: Like the Tao.

## *The Duty of Government*

1. The government of a kingdom is like the cooking of a fish.

This means, it is the simplest possible operation.

2. If the kingdom be ruled according to the Tao, the spirits of our ancestors will not manifest their Teh.<sup>1</sup> These spirits have this Teh, but will not turn it against men. It is able to hurt men; so also is the Wise King, but he doth not.

3. When these powers<sup>2</sup> are in accord, their Good Will produceth the Teh, endowing the people therewith.

---

1: *i.e.*, their Magick Powers, from indignation at the mischief wrought by their descendents.

2: The spirits and the Wise King.

## LXI

# *The Modesty of the Teh*

1. A state becometh powerful when it resembleth a great river, deep-seated; to it tend all the small streams under Heaven.
2. It is as with the female, that conquereth the male by her Silence. Silence is a form of Gravity.

The nearer one gets to the centre of Gravity, the greater the attraction. It is not that there is any “virtue” in humility; it is simply that all lines converge at the center of the Web.

3. Thus a great state attracteth small states by meeting their views, and small states attract the great state by revering its eminence. In the first case this Silence gaineth supporters; in the second, favour.
4. The great state uniteth men and nurtureth them; the small state wisheth the good will of the great, and offereth service; thus each gaineth its advantage. But the great state must keep Silence.

## LXII

# *The Workings of the Tao*

1. The Tao is the most exalted of all things. It is the ornament of the good, and the protection and purification of the evil.  
*Cf.* “Soul of goodness in things evil.”\*
2. Its words are the fountain of honour, and its deeds the engine of achievement. It is present even in evil.
3. Though the Son of Heaven were enthroned with his three Dukes appointed to serve him, and he were offered a round symbol-of-rank as great as might fill the hands, with a team of horses to follow; this gift were not to be matched against the Tao, which might be offered by the humblest of men.
4. Why did they of old time set such store by the Tao? Because he that sought it might find it, and because it was the Purification from all evil. Therefore did all men under Heaven esteem it the most exalted of all things.

---

\* “There is some soul of goodness in things evil, would men observingly distill it out.”  
—Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, Act IV, Scene 1.

## LXIII

### *Forethought at the Outset*

1. Act without lust of result; work without anxiety; taste without attachment to flavour; esteem small things great and few things many; repel violence with gentleness.
2. Do great things while they are yet small; hard things while they are yet easy; for all things, how great or hard soever, have a beginning when they are little and easy. So thus the wise man accomplisheth the greatest tasks without undertaking anything important.
3. Who undertaketh thoughtlessly is certain to fail in attainment; who estimateth things easy findeth them hard. The wise man considereth even easy things hard, so that even hard things are easy to him.



## LXIV

# *Attending to Details*

1. It is easy to grasp what is not yet in motion, to withstand what is not yet manifest, to break what is not yet compact, to disperse what is not yet coherent. Act against things before they become visible; attend to order before disorder ariseth.
2. The tree which filleth the embrace grew from a small shoot; the tower nine-storied rose from a low foundation; the ten-day journey began with a single step.
3. He who acteth worketh harm; he who graspeth findeth it a slip. The wise man acteth not, so worketh no harm; he doth not grasp, and so doth not let go. Men often ruin their affairs on the eve of success because they are not as prudent at the end as in the beginning.
4. The wise man willeth what others do not will,<sup>1</sup> and valueth not things rare.<sup>2</sup> He learneth what others learn not, and gathered up what they despise. Thus he is in accord with the natural course of events, and he is not overbold in action.

---

1: He does his own Will, instead of aiming at a standard goal.

2: And so sought after by others.

LXV

*The Purity of the Teh*

1. They of old time that were skilled in the Tao sought not to enlighten the people, but to keep them simple.
2. The difficulty of government is the vain knowledge of the people. To use cleverness in government is to scourge the kingdom; to use simplicity is to anoint it.
3. Know these things, and make them thy law and thine example. To possess this Law is the Secret Perfection of rule. Profound and Extended is this Perfection; he that possesseth it is indeed contrary to the rest, but he attracteth them to full accordance.

## LXVI

### *Putting One's Self Last*

1. The oceans and the rivers attract the streams<sup>1</sup> by their skill in being lower than they; thus are they masters thereof. So the Wise Man, to be above men, speaketh lowly; and to precede them acteth with humility.
2. Thus, though he be above them, they feel no burden; nor, thought he precede them, do they feel insulted.
3. So then do all men delight to honour him, and grow not weary of him. He contendeth not against any man; therefore no man is able to contend against him.

---

1: As it were, tribute and worship.

LXVII

*The Three Jewels*

1. They say that while this Tao of mine is great, yet it is inferior. This is the proof of its greatness. If it were like anything else, its smallness would have long been known.
2. I have three jewels of price whereto I cleave; gentleness, economy and humility.
3. That gentleness maketh me courageous, that economy generous, that humility honoured. Men of today abandon gentleness for violence, economy for extravagance, humility for pride: this is death.
4. Gentleness bringeth victory in fight; and holdeth its ground with assurance. Heaven wardeth the gentle man by that same virtue.

## LXVIII

### *Assimilating One's Self to Heaven*

1. He that is skilled in war maketh no fierce gestures; the most efficient fighter bewareth of anger. He who conquereth refraineth from engaging in battle; he whom men most willingly obey continueth silently with his work. So it is said: "He is mighty who fighteth not; he ruleth who uniteth with his subjects; he shineth whose will is that of Heaven."

## LXIX

# *The Use of the Mysterious Way*

1. A great strategist said: “I dare not take the offensive. I prefer the defensive. I dare not advance an inch; I prefer to retreat a foot.” Place, therefore, the army where there is no army; prepare for action where there is no engagement; strike where there is no conflict; advance against the enemy where the enemy is not.

This is quite orthodox strategy, to avoid battle where the enemy is strong, to concentrate on the weak points of his line.

2. There is no error so great as to engage in battle without sufficient force. To do so is to risk losing the gentleness<sup>1</sup> which is beyond price. Thus when the lines actually engage, he who regretteth the necessity is the victor.

A general who is compelled to fight at any point has lost the initiative at that point.

---

1: Elasticity.

## *The Difficulty of Right Apprehension*

1. My words are easy to understand and to perform; but is there anyone in the world who can understand them and perform them?
2. My words derive from a creative and universal Principle, in accord with the One Law. Men, not knowing these, understand me not.
3. Few are they that understand me; therefore am I the more to be valued. The Wise Man weareth sack-cloth, but guardeth his jewel in his bosom.

## *The Distemper of Knowledge*

1. To know, yet to know nothing, is the highest; not to know, yet to pretend to knowledge, is a distemper.
2. Painful is this distemper; therefore we shun it. The Wise Man hath it not. Knowing it to be bound up with Sorrow, he putteth it away from him.



## LXXII

# *Concerning Love of Self*

1. When men fear not that which is to be feared, that which they fear cometh upon them.<sup>1</sup>
2. Let them not live, without thought, the superficial life.<sup>2</sup> Let them not weary of the spring of Life!<sup>3</sup>
3. By avoiding the superficial life,<sup>4</sup> this weariness cometh not upon thee.

One must make a habit of doing one's True Will; at first it is irksome, because of conflict with the accidents of life.

4. These things the Wise Man knoweth, not showeth: he loveth himself, without isolating his value.<sup>5</sup> He accepteth the former and rejecteth the latter.

---

1: They should fear Restriction of their True Wills; if not, they become slaves.

2: They must discover the True Will, and do it. See *Liber Aleph vel CXI, The Book of Wisdom or Folly*.

3: The true, subconscious Will.

4: Rational, instead of subconscious reaction to environment.

5: Confounding the space-marks, etc.

## LXXIII

# *Establishing the Law of Freedom*

1. One man, daring, is executed; another, not daring, liveth. It would seem as if the one course were profitable and the other detrimental. Yet when Heaven smiteth a man, who shall assign the cause thereof? Therefore the sage is diffident.

This difficult passage deprecates the security afforded by worldly prudence. He who fights and runs away may get cut down by pursuing cavalry. The only way is to adapt oneself to one's environment; that is, to the Way of the Tao, which is everywhere.

2. The Tao of Heaven contendeth not, yet it overcometh); it is silent, yet its need is answered; it summoneth none, but all men come to it of their free will. Its method is quietness, yet its will is efficient. Large are the meshes of Heaven's Net; wide open, yet letting none escape.<sup>1</sup>

---

1: Cf. 'Though the mills of God', etc.

## *A Restraint of Misunderstanding*

1. The people have no fear of death;<sup>1</sup> why then seek to awe them by the threat of death? If the people feared death<sup>2</sup> and I could put to death evil-doers, who would dare to offend?
2. There is one appointed to inflict death.<sup>3</sup> He who would usurp that position resembleth a hewer of wood doing the work of a carpenter. Such an one, presumptuous, will be sure to cut his own hands.

This chapter is again difficult. Par. 2 shows capital punishment as interference with Heaven's privilege. Yet in Par. 1 we see the threat of it kept as a ruler's last resort. Only, this is a Fool's Knot proposal; for such punishment is effective only when the people are so happy that they fear it infinitely, so that none ever incurs it. Hence it need never be carried out.

- 
- 1: For the meddlesome governments have made their lives intolerable.
  - 2: Their lives being pleasant.
  - 3: Azrael in the lore of Islam.

LXXV

*The Injury of Greed*

1. The people suffer hunger because of the weight of taxation imposed by their rulers. This is the cause of famine.
2. The people are difficult to govern because their rulers meddle with them. This is the cause of bad government.
3. The people welcome death because the toil of living is intolerable.<sup>1</sup> This is why they esteem death lightly.<sup>2</sup> In such a state of insecurity it is better to ignore the question of living than to set store by it.

These chapters (LXXIV & LXXV) are an interpolation, describing the conditions resulting from neglect of the Tao. The last sentence is not to be taken as didactic, as though a counsel of despair. It is the climax of the lamentation. Lao Tzu was 'agin the Government'; he shows here as well as elsewhere, the influence of his Irish blood.

---

1: Owing to the meddlesome, tax-increasing, Tao-neglecting rulers.

2: And so take the risk of brigandage, etc.

## *A Warning against Rigidity*

1. At the birth of man, he is elastic and weak; at his death, rigid and unyielding.<sup>1</sup> This is the common law; trees also, in their youth, are tender and supple; in their decay, hard and dry.
2. So then rigidity and hardness are the stigmata of death; elasticity and adaptability, of life.
3. He then who putteth forth strength is not victorious; even as a strong tree filleth the embrace.<sup>2</sup>
4. Thus the hard and rigid have the inferior place, the soft and elastic the superior.

---

1: Unable to adapt himself to his environment

2: Is ready for cutting, and also, unable to grow further, decays.

## LXXVII

# *The Way of Heaven*

1. The Tao of Heaven is likened to the bending of a bow, whereby the high part is brought down, and the low part raised up. The extreme is diminished, and the middle increased.
2. This is the Way of Heaven, to remove excess, and to supplement insufficiency. Not so is the way of man, who taketh away from him that hath not to give to him that hath already excess.<sup>1</sup>
3. Who can employ his own excess to the weal of all under Heaven? Only he that possesseth the Tao.
4. So the Wise Man acteth without lust of result; achieveth and boasteth not; he willeth not to proclaim his greatness.

---

1: This knavish idea was advocated by the fabulous founder of Christianity; it is the favourite precept of his most eminent followers.

LXXVIII  
*A Creed*

1. Nothing in the world is more elastic and yielding than water; yet it is preeminent to dissolve things rigid and resistant; there is nothing which can match it.
2. All men know that the soft overcometh the hard, and the weak conquereth the strong; but none are able to use this law in action.
3. A Wise Man hath said: “He that taketh on the burden of the state is a demigod worthy of sacrificial worship; and the true King of a people is he that undertaketh the weight of their sorrows.”
4. Truth appears a paradox.

## LXXIX

### *Truth in Covenant*

1. When enemies are reconciled, there is always an aftermath of ill will. How can this be useful?
2. Therefore, the Wise Man, while he keepeth his part of the record of a transaction, doth not insist on its prompt execution. He who hath the Teh considereth the situation from all sides, while he who hath it not seeketh only to benefit himself.

The Magick Powers must be exerted only according to the whole Will of the Universe without partiality.

3. In the Tao of Heaven, there is no distinction of persons in its love; but it is for the True Man to claim it.



## LXXX

# *Isolation*

1. In a little kingdom of few people it should be the order that though there were men able to do the work of ten men or five score, they should not be employed.<sup>1</sup> Though the people regard death as sorrowful, yet they should not wish to go elsewhere.
2. They should have boats and wagons, yet no necessity to travel; corslets and weapons, yet no occasion to fight.
3. For communication they should use knotted cords.

The curse of modern society is the Press: babble of twaddle, like a drunk prostitute vomiting. One should say only things strictly necessary.

4. They should deem their food sweet, their clothes beautiful, their homes, their customs delightful.
5. There should be another state within view, so that its fowls and dogs should be heard; yet to old age, even to death, the people should hold no traffic with it.

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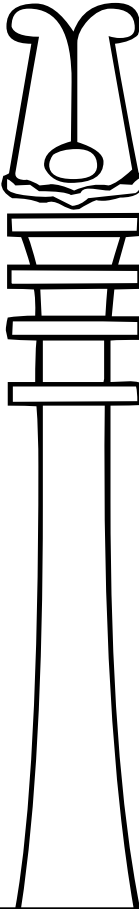
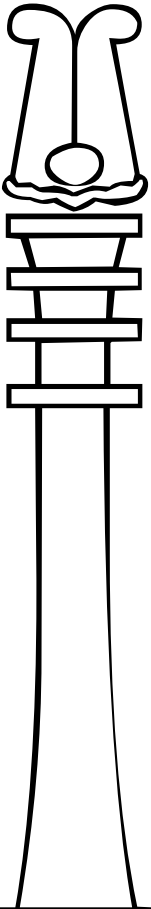
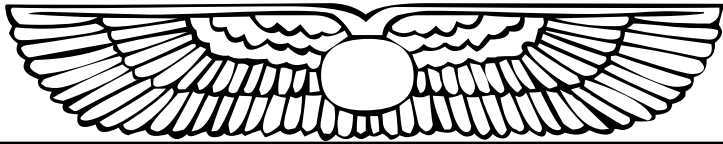
1: At this high pressure.

LXXXI

*The Shewing-Forth of Simplicity*

1. True speech is not elegant; elaborate speech is not truth. Those who know do not argue; the argumentative are without knowledge. Those who have assimilated are not learned; those who are gross with learning have not assimilated.
2. The Wise Man doth not hoard. The more he giveth, the more he hath; the more he watereth, the more is he watered himself.
3. The Tao of Heaven is like an Arrow, yet it woundeth not; and the Wise Man, in all his Works, maketh no contention.

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XXI

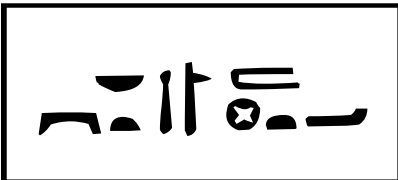
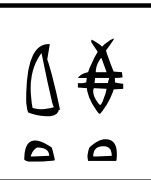
清淨經

THE CLASSIC  
OF PURITY

FIRST WRITTEN DOWN BY ME

萬元

IN THE EPISODE OF THE  
DYNASTY OF WU  
AND NOW MADE INTO A RIME  
BY ME  
ALEISTER CROWLEY





A.:A.:

Publication in Class B

Imprimatur: O.S.V. 6<sup>o</sup>=5<sup>o</sup> Imperator

# *KHING KÄNG KING*

## I

Lao Kun the Master said:  
Tao is devoid of form—  
Yet Heaven and Earth are brought to birth,  
And nurtured by its norm.

Tao hath no will to work;  
Yet by its way of heaven  
The Moon and Sun rejoice to run  
Among the starry seven.

Tao hath no name; its word  
Is growth, and sustenance  
To all; I aim to give it name:  
Tao (heaven prosper chance!)

Tao hath twin phase with Teh:  
The silent and the stressed.  
Of motion, those; of these, repose  
Sublimely manifest

Heaven moves, pure silence he;  
Earth rests beneath the strain;  
Shuttle and loom, as word and womb,  
Their mystery sustain

Pure motion maketh rest  
As silence maketh stress.  
If man were still, then heaven should thrill  
With earth to nothingness.

Self loveth silence, yea,  
But mind distracteth it.  
Mind loveth rest; but passion's pest  
Allures the trembling wit.

If man restrain desire,  
His mind will cease to roll,  
And mind's release allow pure peace  
Of silence to the soul.

The senses will not soil;  
The thought will not upstress;  
Nor poisons (greed, wrath, dullness) breed  
Their triform deadliness.

Men earn not ease of Tao  
For their desire's disease;  
Because their mind is not refined  
Of thought by killing these.

If one should slay desires,  
His mind and body seem  
No longer his, but phantasies  
Danced in a wanton's dream.

Slay mind, slay body, slay  
The external: matter goes.  
Then space remains; renew thy pains!  
Up! front the final foes!

Slay space; then naught abides.  
Hold not thy holy hand!  
When naught gives back before the attack,  
Serene thy silence stand!

All's rest, devoid of mark;  
How should desires fix tooth?  
When they are past, thou surely hast  
The silence of the truth.

Flawless that truth and fixed,  
Yet apt to each appeal  
Nature and sense to influence—  
The magnet to the steel!

Oh! This true touch with all  
Elastic and exact  
That yet abides above their tides—  
The silence free from act!

He that hath this shall come  
Little by little, a breath,  
So floweth he now, to truth of Tao,  
Wherein he vanisheth.

Men style him Lord of Tao,  
Yet he hath none to lord.  
Hid motive he of all that be:  
Enough for his reward!

He that can comprehend  
This doctrine may transmit  
This sacred Tao to men that vow  
Themselves to fathom it.

## II

Lao Kun the Master said:  
The Adept in skill of soul  
Hath never an aim: the bunglers shame  
Is that he gropes a goal.

Who most possess the Teh  
Conceal their Magick power;  
Who least possess exert their strength  
Seven times in every hour.

These, who cling fast to powers,  
Who guard them, and display  
Their magick art—they are not part  
Of Tao nor yet of Teh.

Men win not truth of Tao  
Because their minds are wried.  
The mind uncurbed, the self's perturbed,  
And loses tune of tide.

Lost, the external lures;  
They turn to seek it: then  
All things perplex, confuse, and vex  
Those miserable men.

Disordered thoughts arise;  
Body and mind grow sick.  
Disgrace and fear grow year by year  
To their climacteric.



Wild, they are tossed about  
Through life and death; they quiver,  
Sunk in sea-stress of bitterness,  
And lose the Tao for ever.

The true, the abiding Tao!  
Who understandeth hath;  
Who hath the Tao is here and now  
In Silence of the Path

\*\*\* \*\*

## *Final remarks*

### *Liber CLVII*

Despite the claim on the title page this is not a new translation of the Taoist classic; as explained in Crowley's introduction (previously published in *Magick Without Tears*) it is an adaptation of James Legge's translation (in vol. XXXIX of *Sacred Books of the East*, Oxford, 1891; facsimile reprint as *The Texts of Taoism* (vol. I) New York: Dover Publications, 1962).

This work was initially designated *Liber LXXXI* (from the number of chapters). In the list of forthcoming *Libri* in the Blue Equinox it had been re-numbered CLVII, the former number having been assigned to Crowley's novel *The Butterfly Net* (eventually published as *Moonchild*). See "Sepher Sephiroth" (*Liber D*), s.v. 157 for possible meanings of the later number.

The text and commentary are distinguished by type size and indenting. Some of Crowley's commentary appears to comprise general remarks either on a chapter as a whole or on an individual numbered section: this has been placed at the bottom of the chapter or section it refers to. Material indicated by numbered citations is rather a note on a particular point; text which appears in such a note in round brackets is best read as an gloss to be interpolated into the text (in the Skinner edition it was printed thus).

Footnotes indicated by \*, †, etc., are due to one of the successive transcribers or editors or another, mostly providing translations, identifying quotations, etc.

The Skinner edition is said to have been prepared from various typescripts of *Liber CLVII* which Crowley had made and circulated among his disciples and friends, possibly in the hopes that someone would put up money for publication. Skinner mentions that a planned print edition was provisionally designated *Equinox III* (5).

The Tree of Life diagram apparently appeared following chapter I in the *Equinox* edition. I have redrawn it based on the version printed in *The Book of Thoth* (where it is titled "The Chinese Cosmos"). Here as elsewhere, Crowley uses the transliterations of Chinese names employed by Legge in *Sacred Books of the East*; these differ somewhat from the Wade-Giles and Pinyin schemes used now. In particular it should be observed that consonants have a different phonetic value when italicised. "Tao Teh King" for instance is nowadays rendered Tao Te Ching or Dao De Jing.

### *Liber XXI*

This free verse-rendering of the “Classic of Purity” was probably made by Crowley about the same time as his work on the *Tao Teh King*. It was listed in the “Præ monstrance of A.:A.:" in the Blue Equinox (it was described simply as “LIBER XXI: THE CLASSIC OF PURITY by Ko Hsuen. A new translation (*sic*) from the Chinese by the Master Therion”) and was apparently included in the abortive *Equinox* III (2). A small edition was privately issued by the O.T.O. in London in 1939. While not bound up with the original *Equinox* publication of the *Tao Teh King* (H.P. Smith’s Thelema Publications had reprinted it on its own in 1973) it was included as an appendix to the 1995 reissue (Weiser). This copy is based on a key-entry by persons unknown found on the Internet. For some unclear reason all the etexts of this work I have been able to find are in ALL CAPS. I have not seen a print copy; as such, capitalisation in this edition must be regarded as conjectural restoration.

The *Khing Kǎng King* appeared in English translation (by James Legge) in an appendix to vol. XL of the Oxford University Press “Sacred Books of the East” series. Legge says of it: “It is attributed to Ko Yüan (or Hsüan), a Tǎoist of the Wû dynasty (A.D. 222-277), who is fabled to have attained to the state of an Immortal, and is generally so denominated. He is represented as a worker of miracles; as addicted to intemperance, and very eccentric in his ways.” As indicated by the long title of *Liber XXI* and elsewhere in Liber CLVII, Crowley claimed Ko Yuan as one of his previous incarnations.

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The title pages with the A.:A.: “portal” design for both works are reconstructed, though that for *Liber XXI* is based closely on that from the 1939 edition. Chinese titles &c. are taken directly from facsimiles of S.B.E. 39 & 40.

T.S.