

1

This book can tell you nothing; the Tao leaves you where you began.  
A maiden can leave things nameless; a mother must name her children.  
Perfectly empty or carrying ten thousand words, you still return, and return, and return.  
Naming things loses what unites them.  
Failing to name things loses them into what unites them.  
Words are limits that make experience possible.  
But form and formlessness are the same.  
Tao and the world are the same, though we call them by different names.  
This unity is dark and deep, but on the other hand it is deep and dark.  
It opens into the center of everything.

2

Beauty originates in ugliness, virtue in vice.  
Life and death, being and nothingness: you might as well think of them as the same thing.  
What's easy and what's difficult make each other what they are to the point where they are precisely identical.  
What's long and what's short are the measure of one another.  
What's high and what's low reach toward each other.  
High notes and low notes form a harmony.  
Future and past form a circle.  
So there's nothing to do but remain in the emptiness from which all these notions emerge and into which they are released.  
The speech of the sage is silence; his silence, speech.  
Things come and go, and he lets them.  
He doesn't seize them, and so participates in their own spontaneity.  
He does his job and lets go.  
Because he does, he acts in eternity as he finds repose in time.

3

If you're always groveling before the great, people become envious and quarrelsome.  
If you hide your riches  
you obviously think people are robbers.  
Soon they will be.  
If, on the other hand, you flaunt your things  
you encourage people to be devoured by their own greed.  
So the sage governs himself, not other people.  
He empties his own mind and so helps free others from greed and envy.  
He fills their stomachs and helps them relax.  
He strengthens people's bodies.  
In the company of people, he tries to find simplicity.  
Look. Forget how smart you think you are. Stop wanting everything, as though there is something out there that will cure or fix you.  
Just make things happen by allowing them to happen  
Then everything will turn out alright.

4

The Tao empties itself continually, and is never exhausted.  
The source gives everything as a pure gift.

In it, sharp things are rounded, knots are untied, water settles, clears, becomes pure and still  
Whose child is it?  
It is the source, even, of God.

5  
Obviously, the world makes no judgments.  
It's as likely to be evil as good.  
It doesn't care about our little preferences.  
The Tao is empty, like a flute making music, like a bellows making fire.  
It's silent, like the place from which we speak.  
Live from the center.

6  
The source of water gives over and flows: a woman, a mother, a lover, an origin, clear as mystery.  
The more it yields  
The more it has.

7  
The sky endures, and the earth.  
How? They do not care what they are.  
The sage, too, endures by losing herself.  
To lose yourself is to achieve yourself perfectly.

8  
If there were a god, he'd be like water that brings life to things without trying.  
Water seeks the lowest place and cleanses what it touches.  
It is as satisfied with the humble as with the exalted.  
Still, deep, clear, true, kind, useful, generous, prompt.  
This is also the true man, liquid, and at ease.

9  
Keep pouring, and the vessel overflows.  
Keep sharpening, and the knife becomes useless.  
Hoard gold and jade, and you are in continual danger.  
Pride and its collapse are the same.  
Work hard, then relax.  
Nurture, then release.  
That's the true way.

10  
Let your spirit embrace your body, and your body your spirit.  
Preserve your vital force in a state of utmost flexibility.  
Be like a small child.  
Clean the dark mirror so that it can reflect things with the utmost clarity.  
Order the state merely by loving people.  
Can you overcome your own cleverness and walk the world's path?  
Can you maintain a female receptivity?  
Can you achieve transparent awareness and see everything clearly while remaining still?  
If so, with the Tao, you can create things without owning them.

You can act with immersion in the process and let go of the result.  
Lead but don't dominate.  
This is the forest path.

11

You make a wheel by arranging spokes, but the empty hub receives the axle.  
You make a vessel from clay, but it's the emptiness that holds things.  
You build a house from lumber, but you live in the space inside.  
We work with things and shape the emptiness.

12

Always staring at bright colors makes your eyes less sensitive.  
Always listening to beautiful music can compromise your ability to hear yourself.  
Eating gourmet food all the time can dull your taste for truth.  
Always running around, searching for excitement, hunting for what seems precious injures your capacities.  
So the sage attends to his senses as well as to his pleasures.  
Hence he learns to preserve himself.

13

Honor and disgrace are both warnings.  
Fear and confidence are equally ways by which the self loses everything that is not itself, that is, everything.  
Exaltation anticipates its own collapse.  
Disgrace exalts.  
Exaltation disgraces. Why?  
Because it seems to trap you in the self when in fact there is no self.  
Treasure even your misfortunes, if you can.  
Nature can be trusted to govern everything, even you.

14

You can't see the invisible.  
You can't name the fugitive.  
You can't hear what can't be heard.  
You can't grasp what you can't touch.  
Now can you?  
You can't avoid these qualities, but you can't comprehend them, either.  
They make a universe.  
Tonight the sky is dark and the earth glows as with moonlight.  
A cord stretches from it to it, and returns and returns.  
What is the substance of emptiness, the form of the shapeless?  
Confront it and its face evades you.  
Follow it and its back disappears.  
But still the ancients moved with the Tao into presence.  
Stay connected to the origin.  
That's Tao's cord.

15

In the time of origin, masters and warriors

approached mystery mysteriously, profundity profoundly.

If you try to grasp such people, you miss them: poised, as though hopping rocks in a stream; careful as a man surrounded by enemies; reserved as an honored guest; open, like ice in a thaw; straightforward as uncarved wood; empty and accepting as a valley; opaque as muddy water.

Allow water to settle and it clears, but life stirs nevertheless.

They didn't try to assume any particular form, so they were again at each moment renewed.

16

Arrive at emptiness.

Keep still.

Things are balanced and in repose at their center.

They arise in unison.

We experience that, and then we and they return.

All things come to be together, and in unity they return to the source.

The source is serene.

Emergence and return form a circle.

Its center is permanent; if you find it you find truth, tolerance, comprehensive knowledge.

If you don't find it, you live falsely.

Real nobility is found in acting from the Tao, acting and knowing that you are a part of nature.

Then you, like nature, like the Tao, are inexhaustible.

17

The greatest leader is one of whom the people need not even be aware.

Then there is the one who is loved, then the one who is held in awe, then the rest, who are despised.

If you have no trust in the people, they will show you no trust either.

The real leader acts quietly, without display.

And when he is done, the people say: we did the right thing, spontaneously.

We must be good.

18

Benevolence and rectitude make their appearance

When the real Tao is lost, Learning and intelligence appear together with hypocrisy.

Filial piety is necessary only if there's no peace in the family.

Patriotic fervour arises in a nation in crisis.

19

Abandon holiness, discard your plans, and the people will improve.

Let go of duty, and the people will find devotion.

Renounce learning and ceremony, and the people will find peace.

Ditch your clever schemes and thirst for profit, and thieves will disappear.

Better yet, just return to the purity and simplicity, of raw silk or unworked wood.

Lose your self-consciousness and ease yourself away from desire.

20

What, exactly, is the difference between yes and no, good and evil? You can't get one without the other.

Must I fear what other people fear, want what they want?

This wilderness of ideas is bewildering.

Everyone seems to want to party, or glut themselves with food and drink, as though that will refresh

them.

Sometimes I think that I'm the only one who can be alone and hold steady within myself, giving no sign, like a baby who doesn't know much of anything.

I alone can wander aimlessly, and always be home.

Most people have too much, and want even more.

I know that I possess nothing, and am happy that I'm not clever.

I must be the deepest sort of fool.

People try to shine;

I allow myself to be concealed and nurtured in darkness.

People try to be sharp, but I am dull about distinctions.

They resemble the ocean in a gale, but I am adrift and becalmed.

They've got their important purposes;

I let such things go.

They try to seem sophisticated;

I'm deeply uncouth.

I seem to be estranged from people

because I am still connected to the source.

21

A path through the forest is merely where the trees aren't: a clearing or absence.

What is it? Where is it?

These are not exactly the right questions; it is an absence in space that is also the way you are going.

It is surrounded by trees; if it had a nature, that would be it: the stuff all around it that touches and shapes the emptiness within it.

But that's where you move, isn't it?

That's how and where you go.

It is a useful emptiness, an effective absence.

You've never left it, even if you think you have, and everything you've seen, you've seen from it.

I know it because here I am.

22

To become strong, yield.

To be straightened out, bow down.

To achieve fullness, empty yourself.

To be young again, allow yourself to age.

To learn, forget.

The wise person seeks the darkness and shines.

She doesn't boast or compete, so no one can compete with her.

There is an old saying that, like a tree, our survival depends on flexibility, that the rigid snap when the wind rages.

That is a cliché. It is also true.

If you can let yourself go you have already returned.

23

Stop your whining.

Even the most intense storm ends eventually; in fact the strongest storms are brief.

Their origin is the relation of sky and earth.

If they can't go on forever neither can you.

So just do your daily tasks embodying the Tao in yourself.

Allow yourself the experience the power of loss as well as the power of aspiration.  
You can do this by allowing yourself to find your identity with Tao and Te.  
What won't fail you is directness and honesty.

24

Standing on tiptoes, you lose contact with the ground and grow unsteady.  
Trying to take great strides, you forget how to walk.  
Trying to show off, you conceal what actually shines.  
Concentrating on your righteousness, you misplace your real qualities.  
Praising yourself, you make yourself ridiculous.  
In relation to the Tao, that's all just crap.  
If you must embody ambition, make it to steadiness and stillness.

25

In origin all is complete, combined, one.  
There is no distinction between earth and sky: just tranquility, formlessness, solitude, circulating freely, inexhaustible.  
This is the world's mother.  
It precedes and overwhelms our attempts to know or name it.  
Constrained to pick it out, we'd call it Tao.  
It flows without stint, giving everything to everything.  
It has made itself scarce and it is returning.  
Tao is spacious.  
The sky is spacious.  
Earth is spacious.  
Even the center of man is spacious, when it finds its connection to these.  
What we are is fused to earth, earth to sky, sky to Tao, Tao to what we are.

26

The root's stability makes possible the leaf's communion with air.  
Likewise, serenity is always still there, at the heart of agitation.  
The sage travels lightly, but his wagons are heavily laden.  
He is still, even as he moves through the beauty and strangeness of the world.  
He is unattached and rooted simultaneously, a leaf moving freely on a stem.  
He moves outward into the air, into a kingdom, into everything and yet remains steady within himself.  
Without that steadiness, rulership is ridiculous.

27

If you could walk perfectly you would leave no trace.  
If you could speak perfectly your words would be like birdsong, lovely, then gone.  
If you could make perfect decisions you would not stop to calculate.  
You could be secure without locks, bound without cord.  
That's how the sage abandons no one and helps everyone, without trying.  
Maybe people think his light is shrouded; he knows the light and its shroud need one another.  
If he teaches bad people to be good, it's because they taught him first.  
The wise are lost.  
That is called the crux.

28

Encompass the male but reside within the female.  
In the world, be a valley, a source of waters, pure: an infant.  
Know cleanness, but affirm even filth.  
The stream, but also the bank.  
The water and its channel.  
The spring and the fall.  
The origin and the outcome.  
Gaze upon the white, but always from within the darkness that has no borders.  
There you will find your essence.  
The sage is not an official.  
The block of wood is not a tool.  
The fabric is not clothing.

29

Do you intend to seize the world and make it better?  
I hope you will not succeed, and I don't think you will.  
The world is sacred.  
It cannot be improved.  
If you try to transform it you will only damage it.  
If you try to control it you will only lose it.  
Just let it happen, and yourself within it.  
Breathe in; breathe out.  
Push forward; fall back.  
Find strength or lose it.  
Enjoy companionship or dwell in solitude.  
The wise person knows the sweetness of the ordinary.  
Why would she need to go to extremes?

30

If you want to serve your ruler, do it with the Tao, not with weapons, not with force.  
Violence recoils on the person who inflicts it.  
Where armies camp, brambles grow.  
Where armies march, desolation follows.  
Fight only if you must. Be resolute and let go.  
Be resolute and abandon pride.  
Be resolute and abandon vanity.  
Be resolute and abandon cruelty.  
Attain your purpose and stop.  
Don't swagger and wave your manhood around.  
People like that lose their way and die quickly.

31

Weapons, even lovely ones, are terrible things.  
They are forged from greed.  
Abandon them into the Tao.  
Rulers who pursue peace and freedom mourn when they must fight.  
If you are forced to fight, do so solemnly, with clarity and forbearance.  
Do not display weapons proudly or ostentatiously;

that merely displays a love of killing.

If you love killing, you yourself cannot survive.

When you gather to plan a military campaign, it ought to be like gathering for a funeral.

When you see the dead on the field of battle, allow yourself to feel grief and remorse.

If you win the war, mourn.

32

"Tao" is the name of the nameless, of the perfectly simple.

The emptiness at the heart of real power renders it impossible or pointless to resist.

Reside in this central stillness and all things begin to shape themselves and come to exist with ease in your experience.

The sky unites with the earth in a gentle rain.

People find unity without constraint.

Names dissolve and namelessness with them, until each thing is precisely itself; each thing stands as itself in your awareness, names itself, depicts itself, contains itself.

The river contains the sky.

The sea contains the river.

The sky contains the sea.

33

Know others by knowing yourself.

Overcome others by overcoming yourself.

Understanding what is enough is enough.

Presence is perseverance.

Coming to stillness is forging ahead.

Find life by accepting death.

34

The way is a river flowing and overflowing everywhere.

Completely reliable, it receives every thing.

Whatever it does, it does without effort, and when the job is finished lets it go.

It touches everything and controls nothing.

That is why whatever it touches is eternal.

35

Reside in the center where understanding does not require words or images, and folk will come to you to be taught how to be serene.

Where there is good music and food people stop to rest and regain their energy.

But though the Tao seems unmelodious or even bland it is an inexhaustible source of refreshment.

36

To shrink something, allow it to expand.

To weaken something allow it to become strong.

To abolish something, exalt it.

To take something, abandon it.

This is seeing beneath the surface.

Live in the world like fish in a river.

Rule the world like a knife cutting water.

37

The Tao does nothing and leaves nothing undone.  
When a ruler inhabits it, the people come to be themselves.  
They forget even to try not to try.  
In being, everything saves itself.

38

Reality does not represent itself as real: that is its reality.  
Reality abandons itself into reality: that is its presence.  
It cannot judge this to be high or that to be low: that is its exaltation.  
It has no purpose: that is its fulfillment.  
It is without compassion: that is its mercy.  
The man of rectitude tries to make things turn out right, and when that fails he rolls up his sleeves and redoubles his efforts.  
If you lose the way, you lose reality.  
If you lose reality, you lose compassion.  
If you lose compassion, you lose rectitude.  
If you lose rectitude, you lose your manners.  
When people have no manners the world descends into anarchy, tumbles into a void.  
But in the anarchy we act again; we must learn how to behave; we learn rectitude; we learn sincerity: not the appearance this time but the very heart.  
Can you remain in the center and allow things to be?  
Either way you always return.

39

At the origin each thing was whole and all things were connected.  
In their wholeness they found clarity and serenity.  
In their connection, they were sacred.  
People, too, were whole, unified with each other, integral to the world, each one a ruler, each one pure.  
Remain in the primordial purity and the sky will become clear; the earth will find peace; the spirit, strength; the valley, water; living things, growth; leaders, integrity.

Humility is the source of nobility.  
The low is the foundation of the exalted.  
Root yourself in responsibility.  
Quiet yourself.

41

When the wise study about the Tao, they slog through its lessons with appropriate diligence.  
When the sort-of-wise hear about it, they grasp it and lose it.  
If they didn't lose it, they couldn't try to find it.  
When the fool hears about the Tao, he laughs and laughs.  
That is the Tao.  
The Tao sees darkness as though it were light, sees retreat as progress, knows that that the rough conceals the smooth, that the truth appears in fragments, purity within defilement, goodness as incoherence, integrity in letting go, simplicity in ramification.  
A perfect square is a circle.  
A perfect circle is boundless.  
A perfect note is enwrapped in the silence.

The world has no form.  
Is the Tao hidden?  
It forms and fills us.  
It empties and releases us.

42

The Tao makes one.  
The Tao and one makes two.  
The Tao and two makes three.  
The Tao and three makes everything.  
Everything makes the Tao.  
The male and the female separate and coalesce; they are two; they are one; it is whole and lost.  
What people hate is to stand alone, yet that is also what they want.  
Power cannot overcome death.

43

What is unyielding slowly yields to what is yielding.  
That which has no solidity can enter anything, anywhere, and permeate it.  
This shows the value of not intending, of teaching without subject or substance, of moving without effort.  
That is how we travel the path.

44

Let your name name yourself.  
Let your things be yourself.  
Hoarding wealth is poverty; poverty is wealth.  
Avoid disgrace by finding contentment.  
Avoid danger by stopping.  
Then live forever when you are.

45

What is most perfect seems shabby, worn, but it is consecrated by use.  
What is fullest seems empty, a sheer capacity.  
What is most true is not level; what is most skilled is simple; nothing prospers like poverty; sincerity is most eloquent.  
When it gets cold, move around.  
When it gets hot, grow still.  
In general, stay calm.

46

The sky, the ground.  
When they know the way, people use their horses to plow the fields, and use their horses' manure to enrich them.  
When they lose their way, they breed their horses for war.  
No knowing is greater than no knowing.  
Wanting, always wanting: that is our calamity.  
He who knows that he already has what he wants knows peace.

47

Traveling is homelessness.

Seek truth at home; it is there too; and as you travel it remains just as far away as ever.

Therefore the sage knows more and more about less and less.

She stays home.

She is home.

48

A man hungry for knowledge gains something every day.

A man who already knows loses something every day: strips down to the essence and strips down the essence to nothing, and leaves nothing unknown.

To rule, let go.

Let people go; let yourself go; let the empire go.

Anarchy is the only art of rulership.

49

The person who knows has no fixed ideas, and allows the ideas of others to come and go.

They see the goodness in good people, and the goodness in evil people: she sees that both are both and that neither is either, that there is power in both, and powerlessness.

What would be ideal would be to return to the simplicity of childhood.

If we could, we would receive the universe in its own beginning, its infancy, its alien innocence.

50

We live between life and death.

One in three is a follower of life.

One in three is a follower of death.

One in three is suspended, like a leaf in a wind, like a fish in water.

The one who is suspended, who knows and loves life and death, is safe and without fear, even in a world infested with ferocious animals and terrible wars.

The teeth that rend him cannot rend him.

The swords that lacerate him cannot lacerate him.

Even his death is a way of life.

51

Tao is the origin of life.

Your life is that life.

Merely by breathing, by being, you know and honor the source and its expression or manifestation.

Each of us is a place of culmination.

Each of us is nurtured by the source and is what nurtures us.

Create and let go of what you create.

Give and expect nothing.

Work hard and do not claim ownership.

52

The source is a mother.

Nature is her child.

To know the mother, know the children.

They - you - will always return to her.

They - you - will persist in death.

Stop your chattering, close your eyes and find the still moment that is the center and the end of life.

Find truth even, or especially, in what is smallest.  
Let the light bathe your body.  
Live.

53

My greatest fear is pride.  
That's what kills a sage.  
That's what kills the powerful and tortures the powerless.  
The road is plain before us, but we strike out willfully.  
When the palace is grandly appointed the fields are full of weeds and the granaries are empty.  
When the famous and powerful preen, wear grand clothes go armed, and spend all their time eating and drinking and displaying their possessions, the people starve.  
The Tao has no pride.

54

Plant carefully.  
That's the best way to keep your crops from being uprooted.  
Hold tight to what you do not want to lose.  
Love your children; that's the best way to honor your ancestors.  
Cultivate yourself; care for your family; these are the ways to preserve your culture.  
Devote yourself to your village; that's the best way to help your country.  
Measure yourself the way you measure others.  
Measure others the way you measure your village.  
Measure your village the way you measure your country.  
Measure your country the way you measure the Tao.  
And measure the Tao by what is in you.

55

The person who has real power is as immediate and sweet as a baby.  
Bees, wasps, snakes, scorpions don't even bother with a baby.  
His body is yielding, but his grip is strong.  
He knows nothing about sex but his little penis is stiff.  
He spends half the day crying and never gets hoarse.  
That's because he accords with himself and his world.  
Let the vital force within you emerge, and live.  
Then as you grow old, grow old.  
This is the Tao of man.  
It starts strong and does not cease.

56

If you know, there is no need to speak.  
If you speak, there is no need to know.  
Put a lid on it.  
Once in a while, close your openings and explore what you already are.  
Blunt your blade; don't cut the knot; untie it.  
Be as gentle as light, as dust.  
Blend yourself with them.  
Love. But stop trying to possess.  
Enrich yourself. But stop grasping, and you will come to no harm.

Real honor and real disgrace  
are not obtained by effort.  
They are given by nature.

57

If you are a ruler, rule straightforwardly, with simplicity and justice.  
If you are a fighter, fight with extreme unconventionality.  
Conquer without acting, by the strange and sudden realization of the way things are, and yourself with them.  
Rule without prohibiting, and the people will find a way out of poverty.  
When a kingdom is ruled badly, it is ruled with elaborate policies and schemes.  
Laws multiply like mosquitoes.  
For every new law, there are ten thousand new criminals.  
The true ruler rules without ruling.  
He does nothing, and the people naturally take control of themselves.  
He cultivates himself, and the people become just.  
He stops interfering, and the people become independent.  
When each rules himself, the state is well-governed indeed.

58

The more fragmented the government, the more wholesome the people.  
The more the government keeps the people under surveillance, the more cunning and evasive they become.  
Misfortune contains the seed of good luck, and good luck the seed of misfortune.  
What is rigidly correct is perverse; perversity cloaks itself in etiquette.  
Orthodoxy is blasphemous.  
Rigidity twists people.  
Sorry, but that's how it is.  
The sage stays firm but is not rigid.  
She is a blade that does not cut.  
She is right but not in control.  
She glows but does not dazzle.

59

What I'd suggest for ruling is just gentleness and frugality.  
What I'd suggest for ruling is allowing things to grow.  
Be the dirt from which the plant emerges.  
Stay close to the source, hold the seed, and proceed with care.  
Then you will be able to give people power.  
Keeping yourself plain, you will help others be learn themselves.  
Then your empire can be safe, as if in the arms of a caring mother.  
You will be the ground.

60

Rule a great country the same way you'd cook a small fish.

Don't poke at it all the time: just put it in the pan and let it fry.  
One of the hardest things is to let people alone.  
That doesn't mean there won't be any difficulties, only that each person must find his own way through them.  
The way through and the difficulty must both be accepted.  
They are equally necessary.

61

Water flows downhill without trying.  
A great country is ruled the same way; with a feminine receptivity like a sea.  
In it, people and things can find their level, their stillness, their place of peace.  
A great country can conquer a small country by yielding to it.  
A small country can conquer a great country simply by remaining itself, remaining at rest.  
Conquer by giving. by serving.  
It is appropriate for the great to be humble.

62

Tao is the empty center, the darkness and silence.  
You need not throw out high-sounding words or recount your noble deeds.  
When an emperor is crowned, people know he will be appointing officials, so they bring him things: jade, or a beautiful horse or something.  
It would be more honorable to stay calm and make to the empire a gift of the Tao.  
The words, treasures, and appointments are measures of people's crimes.  
Therefore, keep still.

63

Act without acting.  
Work without effort.  
Prepare your food with simplicity.  
What is rigid is brittle.  
Solve problems before they arise; embrace trouble when it comes.  
A huge tree grows from a small seed.  
A huge tower is built brick by brick.  
A journey of a thousand miles begins from the place where you are now standing.  
If you grasp things you lose them.  
Therefore the sage begins in stillness.  
He does not destroy because he applies no power.  
The place people fail is on the verge of success, so remain as careful at the end as at the beginning.  
The sage quiets his desires, does not value the opinion of others, hoards the real treasure.  
He learns to forget what he has learned.  
He helps people without commanding them.

64

The men of ancient times knew the Tao.  
They did not oppose, they simply illuminated.  
People are hard to deal with because they are sophisticated; they know too much.  
Using cleverness to rule a country, you are the merest criminal.  
Rule a country using balance.  
Know the real measure; the simple truth is the real power.

No matter how far you and your country have strayed, return to the source.  
The last shall be first.

65

The ancient rulers taught by not teaching.  
They knew that a country can suffer from a surfeit of cleverness.  
It's the learning not the ignorance of people that makes them unruly.  
To use only knowledge to rule a state invites disaster.  
Instead, use also emptiness.  
Acknowledge your ignorance and rule in that awareness.  
Those who know their own ignorance and nurture others in theirs are suited to rule.  
They have already returned to the source.

66

What is lowest rules, as water always seeks the lowest point.  
The valley is created and ruled by the water at its bottom.  
The sage rules people by knowing the depths by affirming his degradation.  
He rules by following.  
Only the person who is lowest has no competitors.

67

I am great in my resemblance to nothing at all, in my sheer impossibility.  
If we were possible, we'd be boring.  
These are my amazing qualities: I'm compassionate.  
That's my courage.  
I'm frugal, so I'm generous.  
I have no ambition, so I rule.  
To be courageous without compassion, generous without frugality, powerful and at the same time ambitious: that is the way of death.  
Compassion is the real victory.  
Generosity is the real frugality.  
Humility is the real power.  
When nature gives us life it shows all these qualities.

68

Fight without violence.  
Fight without rage.  
Forget the supposed hurts done to you and do not seek vengeance.  
Take pride in your humility.  
Real decency is quiet, it brings people together and empties the self.  
It is the same thing that holds the universe together.

69

Here's a guide to strategy:  
Do not seek the fight; accept it.  
Don't get ahead of yourself, but stay in the center.  
Look the foe directly in eye.  
Be ready to fight, but not eager.  
Do not brandish your weapon like an idiot.

If you find a real foe, respect him, know him; to fight him is to honor him.  
And however brutal the battle, do not forget compassion, or you will have lost indeed.

70

What I'm teaching you is easy to understand; perhaps you're thinking too hard.  
What I'm teaching you is easy to put into practice; perhaps you should relax.  
What I'm teaching you has a source; but you're expecting a result.  
You want the precious jade; I offer only homespun cloth.  
Which will keep you warm?

71

What would be best would be to know without knowing you know, or not to know without knowing that you do not know.  
It's that second layer that kills you.  
The healthy are just the folks who don't yet know they're sick.

72

People who do not fear punishment cannot be controlled.  
People who fear punishment tempt everyone to oppress them.  
Therefore proceed without fear.  
Proceed without fixed purposes: those purposes will be turned into threats.  
Be as wide as the sky, and just as stormy or as calm.

73

Obviously, bravery in battle sometimes gets you killed.  
Real courage helps you survive, and everyone else too.  
Or, try this: courage sometimes helps you survive.  
Other times it gets you killed.  
Who knows the reason that things happen?  
Some things seem easy, some hard.  
At any rate, the sage doesn't struggle, but simply responds.  
He doesn't summon, but things appear.  
He's patient and resourceful.  
When the source casts its net, nothing escapes.

74

When people fear death, there's always an executioner.  
Where people fear death, there officials and criminals control them with its threat.  
If people didn't fear death, they could not be governed by death.  
But think about the executioner.  
His first victim is himself.

75

When taxes are high, officials get fat while the people starve.  
Then the officials blame the people for being unruly.  
Really. These people will kill you to enrich themselves.  
They call that "justice" or "order."

76

At birth one is soft and flexible; at death one is stiff and brittle.  
A fresh shoot is perfect supple; a weathered branch snaps in a wind.  
Flexibility is life; rigidity is death.  
If your weapon is too strong, it will bring your own destruction.  
If a tree is too strong, it will fall.  
The mighty are scum.  
The low are exalted.

77

The world is like a bow being drawn; what is high comes down; what is low rises.  
What is lacking gets filled; what is full leaks into the emptiness.  
The world threatens those who have too much and yields its real wealth to those who have nothing.  
Yet human beings try to operate in exactly the opposite way.  
We give power to those with power and take it away from those who don't.  
Good luck!  
Justice always returns.

78

Nothing is more yielding than water.  
And yet nothing can resist it in the long run; it shapes the earth.  
Therefore for conquest substitute generosity.  
In the long run, what gives rules, what hardens itself erodes into it.  
I'm serious about this.  
The sage knows that dishonor inculcates real virtue; power only pride, only death.  
True words appear deranged.

79

You can apparently resolve a situation of conflict by a compromise.  
But the resentments will remain.  
The sage does not sit there with a tally book toting up the injustices.  
That's just a sad way to live.  
If you want to stop losing, stop keeping score.

80

The best situation would be to live in a small country.  
Have enough weapons to defend it; try not to use them.  
Preserve the people's lives and give them reasons to stay at home.  
Don't parade your weapons and have no recourse to stupid patriotism.  
People did fine when they kept records with knotted string, when they were satisfied with a good meal and plain dress.  
That was beauty indeed.  
Practicing your traditions and being secure in your home: that is enough.  
Although there may be great a great metropolis nearby, people won't even need to go there.

81

True words aren't elegant.  
Elegant words aren't true.  
Good people don't quibble.  
People who quibble aren't good.

Those who know aren't scholars.

Scholars don't know.

Sages just give, without effort; the more they give, the more they have.

The way to safety is to empty the self.

The more the ruler can give to his people, the more he will have.

Accomplish without formulating policies.