**Chapter 1**

The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao  
The name that can be named is not the eternal name  
The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth  
The named is the mother of myriad things  
Thus, constantly without desire, one observes its essence  
Constantly with desire, one observes its manifestations  
These two emerge together but differ in name  
The unity is said to be the mystery  
Mystery of mysteries, the door to all wonders

**Chapter 2**

When the world knows beauty as beauty, ugliness arises  
When it knows good as good, evil arises

Thus:

being and non-being produce each other  
Difficult and easy bring about each other  
Long and short reveal each other  
High and low support each other  
Music and voice harmonize each other  
Front and back follow each other

Therefore the sages:  
Manage the work of detached actions  
Conduct the teaching of no words  
They work with myriad things but do not control  
They create but do not possess  
They act but do not presume  
They succeed but do not dwell on success  
It is because they do not dwell on success  
That it never goes away

**Chapter 4**

The Tao is empty  
When utilized, it is not filled up  
So deep! It seems to be the source of all things

It blunts the sharpness  
Unravels the knots  
Dims the glare  
Mixes the dusts

So indistinct! It seems to exist  
I do not know whose offspring it is  
Its image is the predecessor of the Emperor

**Chapter 8**

The highest goodness resembles water  
Water greatly benefits myriad things without contention  
It stays in places that people dislike  
Therefore it is similar to the Tao

Dwelling with the right location  
Feeling with great depth  
Giving with great kindness  
Speaking with great integrity  
Governing with great administration  
Handling with great capability  
Moving with great timing

Because it does not contend  
It is therefore beyond reproach

**Chapter 9**

Holding a cup and overfilling it  
Cannot be as good as stopping short  
Pounding a blade and sharpening it  
Cannot be kept for long

Gold and jade fill up the room  
No one is able to protect them  
Wealth and position bring arrogance  
And leave disasters upon oneself

When achievement is completed, fame is attained  
Withdraw oneself  
This is the Tao of Heaven

**Chapter 10**

In holding the soul and embracing oneness  
Can one be steadfast, without straying?  
In concentrating the energy and reaching relaxation  
Can one be like an infant?  
In cleaning away the worldly view  
Can one be without imperfections?  
In loving the people and ruling the nation  
Can one be without manipulation?  
In the heavenly gate's opening and closing  
Can one hold to the feminine principle?  
In understanding clearly all directions  
Can one be without intellectuality?

Bearing it, rearing it  
Bearing without possession  
Achieving without arrogance  
Raising without domination  
This is called the Mystic Virtue

**Chapter 12**

The five colors make one blind in the eyes  
The five sounds make one deaf in the ears  
The five flavors make one tasteless in the mouth

Racing and hunting make one wild in the heart  
Goods that are difficult to acquire make one cause damage

Therefore the sages care for the stomach and not the eyes  
That is why they discard the other and take this

**Chapter 13**

Favor and disgrace make one fearful  
The greatest misfortune is the self  
What does "favor and disgrace make one fearful" mean?  
Favor is high; disgrace is low  
Having it makes one fearful  
Losing it makes one fearful  
This is "favor and disgrace make one fearful"

What does "the greatest misfortune is the self" mean?  
The reason I have great misfortune  
Is that I have the self  
If I have no self  
What misfortune do I have?

So one who values the self as the world  
Can be given the world  
One who loves the self as the world  
Can be entrusted with the world

**Chapter 14**

Look at it, it cannot be seen  
It is called colorless  
Listen to it, it cannot be heard  
It is called noiseless  
Reach for it, it cannot be held  
It is called formless  
These three cannot be completely unraveled  
So they are combined into one

Above it, not bright  
Below it, not dark  
Continuing endlessly, cannot be named  
It returns back into nothingness  
Thus it is called the form of the formless  
The image of the imageless  
This is called enigmatic  
Confront it, its front cannot be seen  
Follow it, its back cannot be seen

Wield the Tao of the ancients  
To manage the existence of today  
One can know the ancient beginning  
It is called the Tao Axiom

**Chapter 16**

Attain the ultimate emptiness  
Hold on to the truest tranquility  
The myriad things are all active  
I therefore watch their return

Everything flourishes; each returns to its root  
Returning to the root is called tranquility  
Tranquility is called returning to one's nature  
Returning to one's nature is called constancy  
Knowing constancy is called clarity

Not knowing constancy, one recklessly causes trouble  
Knowing constancy is acceptance  
Acceptance is impartiality  
Impartiality is sovereign  
Sovereign is Heaven  
Heaven is Tao  
Tao is eternal  
The self is no more, without danger

**Chapter 20**

Cease learning, no more worries  
Respectful response and scornful response  
How much is the difference?  
Goodness and evil  
How much do they differ?  
What the people fear, I cannot be unafraid

So desolate! How limitless it is!  
The people are excited  
As if enjoying a great feast  
As if climbing up to the terrace in spring  
I alone am quiet and uninvolved  
Like an infant not yet smiling  
So weary, like having no place to return  
The people all have surplus  
While I alone seem lacking  
I have the heart of a fool indeed – so ignorant!  
Ordinary people are bright  
I alone am muddled  
Ordinary people are scrutinizing  
I alone am obtuse  
Such tranquility, like the ocean  
Such high wind, as if without limits

The people all have goals  
And I alone am stubborn and lowly  
I alone am different from them  
And value the nourishing mother

**Chapter 26**

Heaviness is the root of lightness  
Quietness is the master of restlessness

Therefore the sages travel an entire day  
Without leaving the heavy supplies  
Even though there are luxurious sights  
They are composed and transcend beyond

How can the lords of ten thousand chariots  
Apply themselves lightly to the world?  
To be light is to lose one's root  
To be restless is to lose one's mastery  
In lightness the rule is lost  
In haste the ruler is lost

**Chapter 37**

The Tao is constant in non-action  
Yet there is nothing it does not do

If the sovereign can hold on to this  
All things shall transform themselves  
Transformed, yet wishing to achieve  
I shall restrain them with the simplicity of the nameless  
The simplicity of the nameless  
They shall be without desire  
Without desire, using stillness  
The world shall steady itself

**Chapter 38**

High virtue is not virtuous  
Therefore it has virtue  
Low virtue never loses virtue  
Therefore it has no virtue  
High virtue takes no contrived action  
And acts without agenda  
Low virtue takes contrived action   
And acts with agenda   
High benevolence takes contrived action  
And acts without agenda  
High righteousness takes contrived action  
And acts with agenda  
High etiquette takes contrived action  
And upon encountering no response  
Uses arms to pull others

Therefore, the Tao is lost, and then virtue  
Virtue is lost, and then benevolence  
Benevolence is lost, and then righteousness  
Righteousness is lost, and then etiquette  
Those who have etiquette  
are a thin shell of loyalty and sincerity  
And the beginning of chaos  
Those with foreknowledge  
Are the flowers of the Tao  
And the beginning of ignorance  
Therefore the great person:  
Abides in substance, and does not dwell on the thin shell  
Abides in the real, and does not dwell on the flower  
Thus they discard that and take this

**Chapter 41**

The superior student listens to the Way  
And follows it closely.  
The average student listens to the Way  
And follows some and some not.  
The lesser student listens to the Way  
And laughs out loud.  
If there were no laughter it would not be the Way.

So, it has been said:  
The light of the Way seems dim.  
The progress of the Way seems retreating.  
The straightness of the Way seems curved.  
The highest virtue seems as low as a valley.  
The purest white seems stained.  
The grandest virtue seems deficient.  
The sturdiest virtue seems fragile.  
The most fundamental seems fickle.  
The perfect square lacks corners.  
The greatest vessel takes long to complete.  
The highest tone is hard to hear.  
The great image lacks shape.

The Way is hidden and nameless.  
Still only the Way nourishes and completes.

**Chapter 42**

The Way gave birth to one.

One gave birth to two.

Two gave birth to three.

Three gave birth to all things.

All things carry yin and embrace yang.

They reach harmony by blending with the vital breath.

What people loathe the most

Is to be orphaned, desolate, unworthy.

But this is what princes and kings call themselves.

Sometimes gain comes from losing,

And sometimes loss comes from gaining.

What others have taught, I also teach:

The forceful and violent will not die from natural causes.

This will be my chief doctrine.

**Chapter 44**

Fame or the self, which is dearer?  
The self or wealth, which is greater?  
Gain or loss, which is more painful?

Thus excessive love must lead to great spending  
Excessive hoarding must lead to heavy loss

Knowing contentment avoids disgrace  
Knowing when to stop avoids danger  
Thus one can endure indefinitely

**Chapter 48**

Pursue knowledge, daily gain  
Pursue Tao, daily loss

Loss and more loss  
Until one reaches unattached action  
With unattached action, there is nothing one cannot do

Take the world by constantly applying non-interference  
The one who interferes is not qualified to take the world

**Chapter 57**

Use justice to rule a country  
Use surprise to wage war.  
Use non-action to govern the world.

How do I know it so?  
As for the world,  
The more restrictions there are,  
The poorer the people will be.  
The more sharp weapons people have in a country,  
The bigger the disorder will be.  
The more clever and cunning people are,  
The stranger the events will be.  
The more laws and commands there are,  
The more thieves and robbers there will be.

Therefore the sages says:  
I do not act,  
And people become reformed by themselves.  
I am at peace,  
and people become fair by themselves.  
I do not interfere,  
And people become rich by themselves.  
I have no desire to desire,  
And people become like the uncarved wood by themselves.

**Chapter 68**

The great generals are not warlike  
The great warriors do not get angry  
Those who are good at defeating enemies do not engage them  
Those who are good at managing people lower themselves  
It is called the virtue of non-contention  
It is called the power of managing people  
It is called being harmonious with Heaven  
The ultimate principle of the ancients

**Chapter 81**

True words are not pleasing.  
Pleasing words are not true.  
Those who are right do not argue.  
Those who argue are not right.  
Those who know are not learned.  
Those who are learned do not know.

The sage does not hoard.  
The more he does for others,  
The more he has.  
The more he thereby gives to others.  
The ever more he gets.

Heaven's Way  
Is to benefit and not to harm.  
The sage's Way  
Is to act and not to contend.