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THE BOOK OF THE PATH OF VIRTUE

OR

A VERSION OF THE TAO-TEH-KING OF LAO-TZE,

The Chinese Mystic and Philosopher :

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION & ESSAY ON THE TAO

AS PRESENTED IN

THE WRITINGS OF CHUANG-TZE,

The Apostle of the Tao-Tze,

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

LAO-TZE, the luminary of the school of mystical philosophers of the Taotze, was born in the year B. C. 604.

Little or nothing is known of his early life, but we find him at an advanced age acting as Curator of the Royal Library of Kao, from which he retired in order to devote himself to quiet meditation in the Pass of Hsien-Ku in the district of the Ling-Pao. In thus retiring from public service, he had, no doubt, hoped to pass at once beyond the circle of his worldly activities as one seeking his home and rest after the heat and toil of the day. But on the way to the Pass of Hsien-Ku he was recognized by the guard of the Kwan-Yin Pass, who, being himself a follower of the Tao, looked with jealous eyes upon the setting of his great luminary and instructor. The guard importuned the Sage to commit to writing some of his teachings and precepts, before retiring into seclusion. Lao-tze therefore wrote a work on the Tao and its characteristics, and thereafter went his way. Such is the record in regard to the origin of this book. Nothing whatever is known as to the place and manner of Lao-tze's death.

Between Lao tze and the historian Sze-Ma (B. C. 85), from whom our information is derived, there were many notable exponents of the philosophy of the Tao, chief among whom were Lieh-tze, Chuang-tze, Hang-Fei, and Hwai-Nan-tze.

That the philosophy of Lao-tze rapidly spread and cast its influence over the minds of the learned of those days in China, is evident from the fact that the Imperial Library of Sui (589—618 A. D.) contained many copies of Lao-tze's work and as many commentaries thereon. Under the patronage of the Emperors of the Han dynasty, the sect of the Tao-tze flourished, and the monarchs themselves were eager students of its mystical and ethical teachings. King, son of Wan, ordered that the philosophy of Lao-tze should be read at Court, and under the same mandate it became a classic throughout the country and was dignified by the name of *K'ing*; hence the name "*Tao-teh-*

king" of the present work. The school of Kong-fu-tze (Confucius) was consequently on the decline during the rule of this dynasty, and very bitter were the criticisms which passed between the rival sects during this period. That the secular teachings of Confucius ultimately prevailed, does not detract from the inherent virtue of our author's philosophy, but rather indicates that the tenets of Confucius better suited the more active policy of succeeding rulers, and, possibly, the inability of the people to appreciate a philosophy so abstruse and seemingly paradoxical as that of Lao-tze. Yet the highest truths must ever be paradoxical when expressed in terms of our consciousness, which in itself is bounded by relativity and defined only in reference to "the pairs of opposites." To those who have studied closely the *yoga* system of the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, the teachings of Lao-tze will bear some appearance of familiarity upon first acquaintance, the doctrine of *non-action*—i. e., the dissociation of oneself as the doer from that which is done,—being in particular common to both systems.

It is not until the 11th century, and after the introduction of Buddhism into China, that we find the doctrine of the Tao forming the basis of a definite religious system with monasteries and schools, priests and acolytes, and all the ritual of an ecclesiastical order. Previously it bore only the marks of a mystical philosophy, and necessarily the crystallization of the doctrine, together with the "bells and pomegranates" and other embroidery of the plain vesture, must be regarded as signs of a rapid degeneration of its votaries, rather than as a reflection upon the tendencies of the doctrine itself, which, as the present work will show, was opposed to the religious *system* in all its forms. For Lao-tze there was but one religion, the "Tao of Heaven," and its expression was spontaneous as between the individual and Nature, like the prattle of a child in the arms of its mother (*vide* ch. XIX and XX).

Now regarding the use of the terms *Tao*, *Teh* and *Tien*, concerning which much discussion has arisen among translators. The word *Tao* has a mystical signification similar to the different terms used by many mystical writers, such as "Verbum," "Logos," "Voice," "Way," "Path," "Truth," "Reason," &c. I incline to the use of the word "Path" as an equivalent of *Tao*, adding only the comment, which the mystical sense

seems to require, "Thou art the Path." M. Abel Rémusat, Professor of Chinese in Paris, says concerning the term *Tao* : "This word does not seem capable of proper translation save by the word *Logos*, in the triple sense of Sovereign Being, the Reason, and the Word." Mr. Balfour in his translation of the works of Chuang-tze has used the word *Tao* as a synonym of "Nature," but the context of our author does not warrant the translation (*vide* ch. IV). So in the expression "the Way of Nature," Mr. Balfour understands "her processes, methods and laws." The "Reason" is seen as "the Intelligence working in all created things, producing, preserving and life-giving"; while the "Doctrine" is held to be "the true doctrine respecting the laws and mysteries of Nature." Thus the Way, the Reason, and the Doctrine of Tao are referred to the effects, causes and principles derived from Nature, and the philosophy of Lao-tze is presumed to embody a system which at once engages the intuitional, rational and perceptive powers of Man, the cognizer of Nature.

I venture to think, however, that Tao transcends Nature ; the latter, as "the mother of all things," being in relation to Tao as an effect to its cause or a body to its soul, which, while expressing, does not comprehend it. Tao seems an equivalent of the mystical term *Sat* of the *Vedānta* philosophy, used to designate the superlative state of pure being, itself unrelated while comprehending all relations.

Teh I apprehend to be an equivalent of *Dharma*, as being the mode of existence proper to Tao in its manifestations ; its true meaning being expressed in the words "virtue," "use"; and the idea conveyed therein is that of *proprium*, that which is proper to the nature of a thing or creature, apart from the accidents of human polity, custom and usage.

Tien is a term frequently used to designate Heaven, not as a place but as a *state* of being, and, as in our own phraseology, is often referred to the Deity. Therefore by the "Tao of Heaven" I understand our perception of the Divine Laws, *lit* : the Path of God.

In translating the title of the *Tao-teh-king*, M. Julien adopts the phrase "the Book of the Way and of Virtue," but while using this form in the title, he retains the word "Tao" in the text of his work. This method is warranted by the fact

that no single term which may be used as the equivalent of *Tao* can be uniformly applied to its context throughout the book. The extreme flexibility of the term "Tao" I consider to be most appropriate to the view of it presented in Ch. I and IV; and in this respect it is similar to many others used in the mystical schools of India, Greece and Egypt, terms which the escape definition by their wide suggestiveness.

I do not find that the Lao-tze's book deals with two independent subjects, as suggested in M. Julien's translation of the title, and I have therefore adopted a form which preserves the connection between the "Tao" and its "Teh."

The text of the present work has been adopted after careful reading of the several translations extant, aided by such intuitions as have arisen from familiarity with theosophical and mystical speculations. The titles of the Chapters are not in the original, but were added by one of its numerous commentators.

THE ADYAR, MADRAS.

WALTER R. OLD.

THE BOOK OF THE PATH OF VIRTUE.

I.

The definition of Tao. The Path that is the subject of discussion is not the Eternal Path.

The quality which can be named is not its real attribute.

That which was before Heaven and Earth is called the Non-existent. Existence is the Mother of all things.

Therefore does man seek after the First Mystery of Non-existence, while viewing in that which exists the ultimates thereof.

Non-existence and Existence are identical in everything but name.

This identity of apparent opposites I designate the Profound, the Great Deep, the Open Door of Bewilderment.

II.

Self-perfection. When the world speaks of Beauty as being beautiful, ugliness is at once defined.

When Goodness is seen to be good, evil is at once apparent.

So do Existence and Non-existence mutually give rise to one another ; as that which is difficult and easy, distant and near, high and low, shrill and bass, preceding and following.

The wise man therefore is occupied only with that which is without prejudice.

He teaches without the use of words ; he works without effort ; he produces without possessing ; he acts without regard to the fruit of action ; he brings his work to perfection without assuming credit ; and, claiming nothing as his own, he cannot at any time be said to lose.

III.

Resting the People. Avoiding distinctions of merit among the people prevents jealousy.

Not setting a value upon rare things prevents theft.

Not seeking the things of sense keeps the mind in peace.

Thus the sage governs by ridding the heart of its desires ; by giving the stomach due satisfaction ; by resting the muscles and strengthening the bones ; by preserving the world from the knowledge of evil and hence from its desire, and by making those who have such knowledge afraid to use it.

He acts through Non-action and by this he governs all.

IV.

The Causeless. Tao is without limit ; its depth is the origin of all that is.

It makes sharp things round ; it brings order out of disorder ; it obscures brilliancy ; it is wholly indifferent.

I know not who gave it birth. It is more ancient than God.

V.

The Value of Nothing. Neither Heaven nor Earth has any predilections ; they regard all persons and things as sacrificial images.

The wise man knows no distinctions ; he beholds all men as things made for holy uses.

The celestial space is like unto bellows ; though containing nothing that is solid, it does not at any time collapse, and being the more set in motion, the more does it produce.

The inflated man however is soon exhausted.

Than self-restraint there is nothing better.

VI.

The Origin of Things. Like the river of the valley the Spirit is never dried up.

I call it the Mother-deep.

The motion of the Mother-deep I call the origin of Heaven and Earth.

Forever it endures, and moves without design.

VII.

Hiding the Light. Both Heaven and Earth endure a long time.

That which causes them so to endure is their indifference to long life.

That is why they subsist.

So the wise man, being indifferent to himself, is yet the greatest among men; and having no care for himself he is nevertheless preserved.

By being the most unselfish he is the most secure of all.

VIII.

The Easy

The greatest virtue is like water.

Nature.

Water is good to all things.

It attains the most inaccessible places without strife.

Therefore it is like unto Tao.

It has the virtue of adapting itself to its place.

It is virtuous like the heart by being deep.

In giving itself it has the virtue of benevolence.

It is virtuous like speech, by being faithful.

It is virtuous like government in making clean.

It is virtuous like a servant in its ability.

It is virtuous, like action, by being in season.

And, because it does not strive, it has no enemies.

IX.

Making things It is advisable to refrain from continual
Equal. reaching after wealth.

Continual handling and sharpening wears away the most durable thing.

If the house be filled with jewels, who shall protect them?

Wealth and glory bring care along with pride.

To withhold when good work is done and honor is advancing, is the way of Heaven.

X.

What By conserving the natural and spiritual
is possible. powers and retaining virtue, it is possible to escape dissolution.

By restraining the passions and letting gentleness have sway, it is possible to continue as a child.

By purging the mind's eye from impurity, it is possible to continue untainted.

By governing the people with love, it is possible to remain unknown.

By continual use of the gates of heaven it is possible to preserve from rust.

By transparency on all sides it is possible to pass unrecognized.

To bring forth and preserve, to produce without possessing, to act without hope of reward, and to expand without waste,—this is the supreme virtue.

XI.

The use of nothing. The thirty spokes of a carriage wheel, uniting at the nave, are made useful by the hole in the centre where nothing exists.

Vessels that are moulded from the earth are useful by reason of their hollowness.

Doors and windows are useful to a house by being cut out.

A house is useful because of its emptiness.

Existence therefore is like unto gain, but Non-existence to use.

XII.

Shutting the doors. Light will blind a man's eyes; sound will make him deaf; taste will ruin the palate; the chase will make a man wild; and precious things will tempt him.

Therefore does the wise man provide for the soul and not for the senses.

He ignores the one and takes the other in both hands.

XIII.

Preventing a fall. Dignity and shame are the same as fear.
Fortune and disaster are the same as the person.

What is said of dignity and shame is this:—Shame is abasement; which is feared whether it be absent or present.

So dignity and shame are inseparable from the fear which both occasion.

What is said of fortune and disaster is:—the Person is that to which fortune and disaster happen and through which they come; for without personality how should I suffer disaster or the reverse?

Therefore, by the accident of good fortune, a man may for a time be allowed to rule the world.

But by virtue of Love a man may be allowed to rule the world for ever.

XIV.

Praising the Void. *Ie*—Plainness is that which cannot be seen by looking at it.

He—Stillness is that which cannot be heard by listening to it.

We—Rareness is that which cannot be felt by handling it. Being undiscernible, they may be regarded as a unity. (I H W.—Tao.*)

It is not bright above, nor dark beneath.

Infinite in operation, it is yet without name. Going forth, it enters into itself.

This is the appearance of the Non-Apparent; the form of the Non-Entity.

This is the Unfathomable Mystery.

Going before it, its face is not seen.

Following after it, its back is not apparent.

Yet, to regulate the one's life by the ancient knowledge of Tao, is to have found the Path.

XV.

Exhibiting Virtue. The ancient philosophers were skilful in their mysterious acquaintance with profundities.

They were fathomless in their depth.

I cannot bring them forth to my mind since they were so profound.

They were cautious, like one who crosses a swollen river.

They were reserved, like one who doubts his fellows.

They were watchful, like a man who travels abroad.

They were retiring, like snow beneath the sun.

They were simple, like newly-felled timber.

They were unobtrusive, like the valley.

They were obscure, like muddy water.

May not a man take muddy water and make it clear by keeping still?

* Mr. Chalmers sees in this cryptogram the *Yod*, *He* and *Wau* of the Kabalistic Tetragrammaton. It is here evidently an equivalent of *Tao*. [Ed.]

May not a man take a dead thing and make it alive by continuous motion ?

Those who follow this Path have no need of replenishing ;
And, being devoid of all properties, they grow old without need of being filled.

XVI.

Going Home. Having emptied yourself of everything,
remain where you are.

All things spring forth into activity with one accord ; and
whither do we see them return ?

After blossoming for a while everything dies down to its
own root.

This going back to one's origin is called Peace ; it is the
giving of oneself over to the inevitable.

This giving of oneself to the inevitable is called Preservation.

He who knows this preservation is entitled Luminous.

He who knows it not perpetuates his own misery.

He who has learned preservation is great of soul.

He who is great of soul is prevailing.

Prevailing, he is a king.

Being a king, he is celestial.

Being celestial, he is Tao.

Being Tao, he endures forever ; for though his body perish,
yet he suffers no ill.

XVII.

Being Natural. In the first age of mankind the people recognized their superiors.

In the second age they served them and flattered them.

In the third age they feared them.

In the fourth they despised them.

Where faith is lacking, it does not inspire with confidence.

How careful were they in their expressions !

When they had done a good thing they would say, 'How very natural we are' !

XVIII.

Patching up. When the great Tao is lost, men follow after charity and duty to one's neighbour.

When wisdom has met with honours, the world is filled with pretenders.

When family ties are sundered, then filial duty and paternal indulgence take their place.

When a nation is filled with strife, then do patriots flourish.

XIX.

Reverting to Nature. By giving up their sanctity and abandoning their wisdom, the people would be advantaged immensely.

Forsaking charity and duty to one's neighbour, the people would revert to their natural relations.

Abandoning excellence and foregoing gain, the people would have no more thieves.

The cultivation of these three things has been a failure.

Therefore should they return whence they came.

As for you, do you come forth in your native simplicity, lay hold on verities, restrain selfishness, and rid yourself of ambition.

XX.

Holding aloof. Dispense with your learning and save yourself anxiety.

The difference between *Ay* and *Yes* is not much after all.

Do they help us to distinguish good from evil ?

For one must always be careful of distinctions !

Alas ! but the people will never be free from their madness.

They are filled with ambition as the ox in the stall is filled with lust.

I am singular in my bashfulness for I have no ambition.

Like a child of tender years I am undeveloped.

I am but a waif, a child without a home.

All others have an excess of good things, but I am like one who is abandoned.

How foolish and simple am I ! I am bewildered !

Every one sparkles with intelligence ; I am alone in my obscurity.

The people are full of discrimination ; I alone am dull.

I am tossed about like the ocean, I roll and am never at rest.

Every one has something to do ; I alone am incapable and without honour.

I alone am estranged from the people, but I glory on the breast of my Mother !

XXI.

The empty Source. The greatest virtue is in simply following Tao.

Tao is intangible, inscrutable.

Inscrutable, intangible, and yet containing forms.

Intangible, inscrutable, and yet containing things.

Profound and obscure, but having an essence.

A veritable essence in which there is consistence.

From eternity till now its nature has remained unchanged.

It inheres in all things from their origin.

How do I know of the origin of things ?

I know by Tao.

XXII.

Increasing the small. Whosoever humbleth himself, shall be preserved to the end.

Whosoever bendeth himself, shall be straightened.

Whosoever emptieth himself, shall be filled.

Whosoever weareth himself away, shall be renewed.

Whosoever subjecteth himself, shall be exalted.

Whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased.

Therefore doth the wise man cling to unity, and is an example for all men.

He is not ostentatious, and therefore he shines.

He is not egotistic, and therefore he is praised.

He is not vain, and therefore he is esteemed.

He is not haughty, and therefore he is honoured.

And because he does not compete with others, no man is his enemy.

The ancient maxim, "Whosoever humbleth himself, shall be preserved to the end,"

Verily, it is no idle saying ! without doubt he shall go back to his Home in peace.

XXIII.

Non-identification. Moderate your speech and preserve yourself.
A hurricane will not outlast the morning.

A heavy rain will not outlast the day.

Who have the power to make these things but heaven and earth ?

And if heaven and earth cannot continue them long, how shall a man do so ?

Therefore, if a man in all things accords with Tao, he is identified with Tao by that agreement.

A virtuous man is identified with Virtue.

A vicious man is identified with Vice.

Whoever is identified with Tao, him do the Taoists receive with gladness.

Whoever is identified with virtue, him do the virtuous gladly receive.

But whoever is identified with Vice, him do the vicious gladly serve with vice.

For, where confidence is lacking, it is not met with trust.

XXIV.

Undesirable honours. By standing on tiptoe one cannot keep still.

Astride of one's fellow one cannot progress.

By displaying oneself one does not shine.

By self-approbation one is not esteemed.

In self-laudation there is no merit.

He who exalts himself does not stand high.

Such things are related to Tao as waste food and excretions to the body ; they are everywhere abhorred.

Therefore the man of Tao will not abide with them.

XXV.

Apprehending the void. Before heaven and earth existed there was in Nature a primordial substance.

It was serene.

It was fathomless.

It was self-existent and homogeneous.

It was everywhere present, nor suffered any restraint.

It is to be regarded as the Universal Mother.

Its name I do not know, but I call it Tao.

If I am constrained to qualify it, I say it is 'the boundless.'

Being boundless, I say it is 'inscrutable.'

Being inscrutable, I say it is 'inaccessible.'

Being inaccessible, I call it the "Ever-present."

Tao, then, is supreme.

Heaven is supreme.

Earth is supreme.

The king is supreme.

There are in the universe four kinds of supremacy, and rulership is one.

Man is ruled by the Earth.

Earth is ruled by Heaven.

Heaven is ruled by Tao.

And Tao is ruled by itself.

XXVI.

*The virtue
of Gravity.*

Weight underlies lightness.

Quiescence underlies motion.

Therefore, the wise man never loses his gravity and quiescence from day to day.

Though glorious palaces belong to him, he dwells in them peacefully, without attachment.

Alas! that a king with many chariots should conduct himself with frivolity in the midst of his dominions!

By levity he loses his ministers, and by inconstancy, his throne.

XXVII.

*The use of
Skill.*

The good walker makes no dust after him.

The good speaker incurs no discussion.

The good reckoner needs no arithmetic.

The good keeper needs no bolts or bars, and none can open after him.

The good binder needs no rope, and none can loose after him.

The wise man is a continual and good helper of his fellows.

He rejects no one.

He is a continual good preserver of things.

He disdains nothing.

His intelligence is all-embracing.

Good men instruct one another ; and bad men are the materials they delve among.

Whoever, therefore, does not give honour to his teacher, and does not cherish his material, though he be called wise, yet is he greatly deceived.

This is no less important than strange.

XXVIII. 6.34

Becoming a Child. He who, having experienced the masculine nature, preserves in himself the feminine, will become a universal channel.

As a universal channel the Eternal Virtue will never forsake him. He will rebecome a little child.

He who, having known the light, remains in obscurity, will become a universal model.

As a universal model the Eternal Virtue will never miss him.

He will go back to the All-Perfect.

He who, knowing Glory, at the same continues in humility, will be a universal valley.

As a universal valley the Eternal Virtue will fill him.

He will revert to Original Simplicity.

This Original Simplicity is that which, being differentiated, gives rise to the innumerable vessels of life.

A wise man, embracing it, becomes the greatest of governors.

A liberal government is that which neither disregards nor hurts anyone.

XXIX.

Non-action. When a man who wishes to reform the world takes it in hand, I perceive that there will be no end of it.

Spiritual vessels must not be fashioned in the world.

Whoever makes, destroys.

Whoever grasps, loses.

For, as must needs be, if one advances, another must fall behind ; if one blows hot, another will blow cold ; if one be

strengthened, another will be weakened ; if one be supported, another will be undermined.

Therefore the wise man renounces all enthusiasm, levity and pomp.

XXX.

Declining from Strife. The man who renders assistance to the king, by the use of Tao, forces the people without resort to arms.

He will not fear the fruit of his actions.

Prickly bushes and thorns flourish where legions are quartered.

Bad years follow on the heels of armies in motion.

The good soldier is brave whenever occasion requires. He does not risk himself for power.

Brave is he when occasion requires, he does not oppress.

Brave is he when occasion requires, he does not boast.

Brave is he when occasion requires, he is not overbearing.

Brave is he when occasion requires, he cannot be mean.

Brave is he when occasion requires, he does not rage.

— Things become old through excess of vigour.

This is called *non-Tao*.

What is *non-Tao* is soon wasted.

XXXXI.

Ceasing from War. Weapons, however ornamental, are not a means of happiness, but are repulsive to every one.

Therefore the man of Tao will not abide where such things are.

A respectable man at home sets the place of honour at his left hand.

But the warrior who goes forth to battle gives honour to the right hand.

For weapons are things of ill omen.

The enlightened man does not use them, save when he cannot help it.

His great desire is Peace.

He does not exult in victory.

To exult in victory is to joy in the loss of human life.

And he who joys in bloodshed is not fit to be entrusted with authority in the world.

When affairs are prosperous, the left side is preferred.

When the state of things is adverse, the right side is esteemed.

The adjutant-general is stationed on the left side and the general-in-chief on the right.

And this, I observe, is after the manner of a funeral procession.

He who has had occasion to kill many people, has cause for deep grief and tears.

Therefore a victorious army observes the order of a funeral.

XXXII.

Wise Virtue. Tao, the Absolute, has no name.

Yet, though thus insignificant in its original simplicity, the world dares not bemoan it.

If a king could hold to it, the world would of its own accord submit itself to him.

Heaven and earth would conspire to nourish him.

The people, without coercion, would peacefully fall into their natural places.

If he should dispose them by titles and names, he would be creating a name for himself.

Yet would he wisely stop at the name, and so avoid the evil of distinction.

Tao is related to the world as the streams and valleys to the great rivers and seas (*i. e.* Tao nourishes and holds it).

XXXIII.

Discerning He is wise who knows others.

Virtue. He who knows himself is enlightened.

He is strong who conquers others.

He who conquers himself is mighty.

He is rich who is well satisfied.

He walks fast who has an object.

He who fills his place remains secure.

He who dies without corrupting enjoys a good old age.

XXXIV.

How to suffer Mighty Tao is all pervading.
Success. It is simultaneously on this side and on
 that.

All living things subsist from it and all are in its care.
 It works, and finishes, and knows not the name of merit.
 In love it nurtures all things and claims no excellence
 therein.

It knows neither ambition nor desire.

It can be classed with the humblest of things.

All things finally revert to it, and it is not thereby in-
 creased.

It can be mentioned with the greatest of things.

Thus does the wise man continually refrain from self-dis-
 tinction.

And therefore he attains to greatness.

XXXV.

The Virtue of Attain to the Great Idea, and all the
Bounty. world will flock to you.

It will flock to you, and will not be hurt therein.

For it will rest in a wonderful peace.

Where there is music and dancing the wayfarer will halt.

In passing over the palate Tao is insipid and tasteless.

In regarding it, the eye is not impressed.

In hearkening to it, the ear is not filled.

But in its uses it is inexhaustible.

XXXVI.

Covert When Nature is about to withhold a thing,
Agreement. it is first certain to increase it.

When about to weaken, it is certain first to strengthen.

When about to debase, it is certain first to exalt.

When about to deprive, it is certain first to give.

This is what I call the covert agreement.

— The soft and the weak overcome the hard and strong.

As a fish cannot leave the ocean without danger, so the
 nation's armament cannot be exposed to the people without peril.

XXXVII.

The Art of governing. Tao remains quiescent and yet leaves nothing undone.

If a ruler or a king could hold it, all things would of their own accord assume the desired form.

If in the process of transition, desire should arise, I would restrain it by the ineffable Simplicity.

The ineffable Simplicity would bring about an absence of desire, and quiescence would return.

Thus the world would regenerate itself.

XXXVIII.

Of Virtue. The superior Virtue is not recognized as virtue, and therefore it is the very essence thereof.

The inferior Virtue has the distinction of virtue, and therefore it lacks the essence.

The superior Virtue is spontaneous and makes no claim to merit.

The inferior Virtue is designing and claims distinction.

The superior Benevolence acts without pretence to virtue.

The superior Justice acts and also makes pretensions.

The superior Expediency is designing, and therefore no one honours it.

It therefore bares its arm and asserts itself by force.

Thus it happens that, when Tao is lost, Virtue takes its place.

When Virtue is lost, Benevolence succeeds.

When Benevolence is lost, Justice ensues.

When Justice is lost, Expediency follows.

But Expediency is the mere shadow of the right and the true, and is the portent of confusion.

Superficial virtue is the mere tinsel of Tao, and the fool makes use of it.

Therefore the truly great man establishes himself upon what is solid, and will not depend upon a shadow.

He holds to the real and avoids display.

He rejects the one and grasps the other with both hands.

XXXIX.

Tracing the Source. Certain things have, by Unity, lasted from the most ancient times, namely ;—

The transparency of Heaven, by Unity.

The steadfastness of the Earth, by Unity.

The incorporeality of the Spirits, by Unity.

The watery plenitude of the Valleys, by Unity.

The life of all Creatures, by Unity.

The government of Princes and Kings, by Unity.

All these depend upon Unity.

Heaven, but for this cause of its transparency, (*viz.*: Unity), would be in danger of obscurity.

Earth, but for this cause of steadfastness, would be in danger of disintegration.

Spirits, but for this cause of their incorporeality, would be in danger of cessation.

Valleys, but for this cause of their plenitude, would be in danger of sterility.

All Creatures, but for this cause of their vitality, would be in danger of destruction.

Princes and Kings, but for this cause of their honour and greatness, would be in danger of an overthrow.

And herein we discern how honour takes its origin from that which is without honour ; and how greatness is grounded in, and upheld by, that which is insignificant.

Hence do Princes and Kings call themselves "orphans," "isolated" and "chariots without wheels."

Do they not thereby acknowledge their authority to be based upon and supported by their inferiors ?

Who can deny it ?

Surely a chariot without wheels is no chariot at all !

It is as hard for a man to be isolated like a single gem as to be lost in the crowd like a commonplace pebble.

XL.

Resigning Work.

The path of Tao is backwards.

The characteristic of Tao is gentleness.

Everything in the universe comes from

Existence, and existence from Non-existence.

XLI.

Like and When a learned man hears Tao he follows
Unlike. it.

When a man of average intelligence hears it, he holds to it for a while and presently loses it.

When an ignorant man hears it, he only laughs at it.

If it were not held in derision by such, it could not rightly be called Tao.

Therefore as the verse-makers would say :—

Who shines with Tao is lost in shade,
 His path of Tao is retrograde,
 And all his actions are obscure.
 The highest virtue has no name,
 The greatest pureness seems but shame,
 True wisdom seems the least secure.

Inherent goodness seems most strange,
 What most endures is changeless Change,
 And squareness doth no angles make.
 The largest vessel none can gird,
 The loudest voice was never heard,
 The biggest thing no form doth take.

For Tao is hidden, and it has no name ; but it is good at beginning and finishing.

XLII.

The Changes Tao emanated the One.
of Tao. The One emanated the Two.
 The Two emanated the Three.

And from the Three all things have proceeded.

All things are backed by the Unmanifest, and faced by the Manifest.

That which unifies them is the immaterial Breath.

Orphanage, isolation and a chariot without wheels, are shunned by the people ; but kings and great men appropriate such terms to themselves.

For things are increased by being deprived ; and being added to, they are diminished.

What people teach by their action I in turn teach them.

Those who are violent and wayward, for example, do not die a natural death.

They teach a good lesson and so I make use of them.

XLIII.

Unlimited Usefulness. The gentlest thing in the world will override the strongest.

The Non-existent pervades everything though there be no inlet.

So, by this I comprehend how effective inaction is.

To teach without words and to be useful without action—few among men attain to this!

XLIV.

Standing still. Which is the closer to you, your name or your person?

Which is the more precious, your person or your wealth?

→ Which is the greater evil, to gain or to lose?

Great devotion requires great sacrifice.

Great wealth implies great loss.

He who is satisfied suffers no ruin.

He who can stand still never meets danger.

These are the people who endure.

XLV.

Indefinite Virtue. He who sees his highest attainments to be incompleteness, may go on working indefinitely.

He who sees his greatest possessions to be emptiness, may go on acquiring forever.

His highest rectitude is but crookedness.

His greatest wisdom is but foolishness.

His sweetest eloquence is but stammering.

Action overcomes cold:

Stillness overcomes heat:

But with virtue and quietness one may conquer the world.

XLVI.

Curbing Desire. When Tao is in the world, horses are used on the pasture-land.

When Tao has left the world, chargers are reared on the wild wasteland.

There is no greater sin than indulging desire.

There is no greater pain than discontent.

There is nothing more disastrous than the greed of gain.

Hence the satisfaction of contentment is an everlasting competence.

XLVII.

Looking abroad. A man may know the world without leaving his own home.

Through his own window he can see the supreme Tao.

The further afield he goes, the less likely is he to find it.

Therefore the wise man knows without travelling, names things without seeing them, and accomplishes everything without action.

XLVIII.

The distress of Knowledge. Bodily and mental distress is increased day by day in the effort to get knowledge.

But this distress is daily diminished by Tao.

Do your repeatedly curtail it, till there be nothing of it left.

By non-action there is nothing which cannot be effected.

A man might, without the least distress, undertake the government of the world. But those who disturb themselves in the government of the world, are not fit for it.

XLIX.

The Virtue of Concession. The wise man has no fixed opinions to call his own.

He accommodates himself to the minds of others.

I would return good for good.

I would also return good for evil.

Virtue is good.

Trust I would meet with trust.

I would likewise meet suspicion with confidence.

Virtue is trustful.

The wise man lives in the world with modest restraint, but his heart goes out in sympathy to all.

The people give him their confidence and he regards them all as his children.

L.

The Value of Life. Men go forth from life and enter into death.

The gates of life are thirteen in number.

The same are the gates of death.

By as many ways doth life pass quickly into death.

And wherefore ?

It is because men strive only after the sensuous life.

It has been said that one who knows how to take care of his life may go throughout the country without providing against the rhinoceros or tiger ; he may even go into the thick of a battle without fear of the sword.

The rhinoceros finds no place wherein to drive his horn.

The tiger finds no place to fix his claws.

The sword finds no place wherein to thrust itself.

And why is this ?

It is because he has overcome death.

LI.

Cherishing Tao brings forth and Teh (Virtue) nurtures.

Virtue. All things take up their several forms, and natural forces bring them to perfection.

Therefore all things conspire to exalt Tao and to cherish Virtue.

But this regard of Tao and Teh is not in deference to any mandate.

It is unconstrained, and endures for ever.

For Tao produces all things ; and virtue nourishes, increases, feeds, perfects, matures, protects and watches over them.

To produce without possessing, to work without expecting, to enlarge without usurping, this is the sublime Virtue.

LII.

Going back That from which the universe sprang may
to the Cause. be looked upon as its Mother.

By knowing the Mother you have access to the child.

And if, knowing the child, you prefer the Mother, though the body perish, yet you will come to no harm.

Keep your mouth shut and close the doors of sight and sound, and as long as you live you will have no vexation.

But open your mouth and become inquisitive, and you will have trouble all your life long.

To perceive things in the germ is intelligence.

To remain gentle is to be invincible.

Follow the light that guides you homeward, and do not get lost in the darkness.

This I call using the Eternal.

LIII.

Increasing Evidence. Ah! that I were wise enough to follow the great Tao!

Administration is a great undertaking.

The great Tao is extremely easy, but the people prefer the complex ways.

While the palace is extremely well appointed, the fields may be full of weeds, and the granaries may be empty.

To dress grandly, to carry sharp swords, to eat and drink to excess and to amass great wealth—this I call stylish theft.

That it is not Tao is certain.

LIV.

The development of Tao & its effects. He who plants in Virtue, never uproots.
He who lays hold on Virtue, never loosens his grasp.

His descendants will worship him without ceasing.

Whoever develops the Tao in himself, will make his Virtue steadfast.

Whoever develops the Tao in his family, will make his virtue abundant.

Whoever develops the Tao in his village, will increase prosperity.

Whoever develops the Tao in the kingdom will make good fortune prevail.

Whoever develops it in the world, will make Virtue universal.

I observe myself, and I come to know others;

I observe my family, and others grow familiar;

I observe the kingdom, and others are known to me;

I study this my world, and other worlds are within my knowledge.

How else should I come to know the laws which govern all things?

Only thus, by observing Tao in myself.

LV.

The Wonderful Harmony. The man who is saturated with Tao is like a little child.

Poisonous creatures will not sting him ; wild beasts will not seize him ; nor will birds of prey pluck at him.

His young bones are not hard, neither are his sinews strong, yet his grasp is firm and sure.

He is full of virility though unconscious of his sex.

Though he should cry out all day, yet he is never hoarse.

Herein is shown his harmony with Nature.

The knowledge of this harmony is the Eternal Tao.

The knowledge of that Eternal Tao is illumination.

Habits of excess grow upon a man ; and the mind, giving way to the passions, they wax stronger day by day.

And when they have reached their climax of power, they die away.

This is against the nature of Tao.

What is contrary to Tao soon comes to an end.

LVI.

The Mysterious Virtue. He who knows the Tao does not talk of it, and those who prattle about it do not know it.

To keep the lips closed ; to shut the doors of sight and sound ; to smooth off the corners ; to temper the glare, and to be on a level with the dust of the Earth,—this is the Mysterious Virtue.

Whoever observes this will regard alike both frankness and reserve, help and injury, honour and degradation.

For this reason he is the most respected of all men.

LVII.

Genuine Government. The righteous man may rule the nation.
The crafty man may rule the army.

But the man who refrains from active measures should be the king.

How do I know how things should be ?

I know by this :—

When the actions of the people are controlled by prohibitory laws, the country becomes more and more impoverished.

When the people are allowed the free use of weapons, the Government is in danger.

The more crafty and dexterous the people become, the more do artificial things come into use.

And when these cunning arts are publicly approved, then do thieves prosper.

Therefore the wise man says: "I will design nothing, and the people will shape themselves.

I will keep quiet, and the people will of themselves find rest.

I will not exert myself, and the people will prosper.

I will put away ambition, and the people will revert to their native simplicity."

LVIII.

Letting others shape themselves. A free and generous government gives the people a chance to develop.

When the government is rigid and exacting, the people are cramped and miserable.

Misery is but the shadow of happiness.

Happiness is but the cloak of misery.

When will there be an end of them?

If we dispense with rectitude, distortion itself will become the rule; and what was good in its way will give place to evil.

Verily, the people have been under a cloud for a long time!

Therefore, the wise man is full of rectitude, but he does not chip and carve at other people.

He is just, but does not admonish others.

He is upright, but he does not straighten others.

He is enlightened, but he does not offend by his brightness.

LIX.

Guarding Tao. In ruling men and serving Heaven there is nothing like moderation.

It is by moderation that one attains to his first state.

When this state is attained, a man may be said to possess an unlimited store of Virtue.

With such a store of Virtue, he will overcome every thing. And of this mastery there will be no limit.

Thus, without restraint, he may possess the kingdom.

Such a man has the Mother-constitution and will endure indefinitely.

He is like the plant whose roots are deep and whose stem is firm.

Thus may a man live long and see many days.

LX.

*Filling the
Throne.*

The state should be governed as we cook small fish, without much business.

Bringing Tao to the government of the kingdom, will give rest to the ghosts of the dead.

Not that the ghosts will not be active, but they will not trouble the people.

But what is more important, the sage ruling the people will not hurt them.

And inasmuch as they do not interfere with one another, their influences converge to one general good.

LXI.

*The Virtue of
Humility.*

The kingdom, like a river, becomes great by being lowly ; it becomes the centre to which all the world tends.

It is similar in the case of women.

The woman conquers the man by continual quietness.

And quietness is the same as submission.

Therefore a great state by condescension to those beneath it, may gain the government of them.

Likewise a small state by submission to one that is greater, may secure its alliance.

Thus the one may gain adherents and the other obtain favours.

Although the great state desires to annex to itself and to nourish others, yet the small state desires to be allied to and to serve another.

So both will be satisfied if the great will only condescend.

LXII.

Practical Tao. Tao is the secret guardian of all things ; it enriches the good man and forbends the evil-doer.

Its good words are always in season.

Its noble action is always in demand.

Even those who are not good it does not neglect.

Therefore when the Emperor takes his seat on the throne and appoints his nobles, he who comes before him bearing the insignia of a prince and escorted by a mounted train, is not to be compared to one who humbly presents this Tao.

For, why did the ancients hold this Tao in such esteem ?

Was it not because it was accessible to all without great seeking, and because by it man might escape from sin ?

Therefore it was esteemed the greatest thing in the world.

LXIII.

On Forethought. Acting without design ; occupied without making a business of it ; finding the great in what is small, and the many in the few ; repaying injury with kindness ; effecting difficult things while they are easy ; and managing great things in their beginnings ; (this is the way of Tao).

All difficult things have their origins in those that are easy ; and great things in what are small.

Therefore the wise man can accomplish great things without ever attempting them.

He who lightly assents will seldom keep his words.

He who accounts all things easy will have many difficulties.

Therefore the wise man takes great account of small things and so never has any difficulty.

LXIV.

Taking care of small Things. What is still is easily held.
What is expected is easily provided for.
What is brittle is readily broken.

What is small is soon dispersed.

Transact your business before it takes form.

Regulate things before confusion begins.

The tree which fills the arms grew from a tender shoot.

The castle of nine storeys was raised on a heap of earth.

The journey of a thousand miles began with one step.

Who ever designs, only destroys.

Who ever grasps, loses.

The wise man does not thus act, therefore he does no harm.

He does not grasp, and hence he never loses.

But the people, in their undertakings, fail on the eve of success.

If they were as cautious at the end as at the beginning, there would be no such failures.

Therefore the wise man is ambitious of what others despise, and sets no value on things difficult to obtain.

He acquires no common learning, but reverts to that which the masses have passed by.

Thus he aims at natural development in all things, and acts without design.

LXV.

Simple Virtue. The ancients who practised the Tao, did not use it for making the people brilliant, but for making them simple and natural.

The difficulty in governing the people is from having too much policy.

He who tries to govern the kingdom by policy, is only a scourge to it; while he who governs without it is a blessing.

To know these two things is the perfect means of government; and a constant eye to them is what is called the Simple Virtue.

Deep and wide is this Simple Virtue; and though opposed to other methods, it can bring about a perfect order.

LXVI.

Putting one's self last. That by which the great rivers and seas receive the tribute of all the streams, is the fact of being lowly: this is why they are superior.

Thus the wise man wishing to rule the people, speaks of himself as beneath them; and, wishing to be foremost, places his person behind them.

Thus, while he is yet above them, they do not feel his weight; and his being before them causes no obstruction.

Therefore all the world exalts him with acclamations and no one is offended.

And, because he does not strive, no one is his enemy.

LXVII.

Three Precious Things. All the world avows that, while my Taoism is great, it is yet incompetent. But it is its greatness which makes it appear incompetent.

If it were like others, it would long have been known as inadequate.

But I hold fast to three precious things, which also I cherish.

The first is gentleness :

The second is economy :

The third is humility.

With such gentleness I can be daring.

With such economy I can be generous.

With such humility I can be great in service as a vessel of honour.

But in these days men relinquish gentleness and become only obtrusive.

They give up economy and become only excessive.

They relinquish the last place and strive for precedence, and thus death.

Gentleness is ever victorious in attack and secure in defence.

Therefore when Heaven would save a man, it enfolds him with gentleness.

LXVIII.

Imitating Heaven. The man who commands well is not imperious.

The man who fights well is not wrathful.

The chief among conquerors does not wage war.

The best of masters governs his servants by condescension.

This is the virtue of not contending.

This is the virtue of persuasion.

This is the imitation of Heaven,—the highest aim of the ancients.

LXIX.

The use of the Supreme Virtue. A great warrior has said: "I dare not be the host, I would rather be the guest (*i. e.*, I shrink from giving the challenge, I prefer to answer it).

I dare not advance an inch, I prefer to retire a foot."

Now this I call filing-in without marshalling the ranks ; baring the arms without preparing to fight ; grasping the sword without unsheathing it ; and advancing upon the enemy without encountering it.

There is nothing so unfortunate as entering lightly into battle.

For by doing so we are in danger of losing that which is most precious.

Thus it happens that when opposing powers meet in battle, he who feels the pity of it assuredly conquers.

LXX.

The difficulty of being known. Easy are my words to know, and likewise to practice.
Yet none are able to know nor yet to practice them.

For there is a remote origin for my words and a supreme law for my actions.

Not knowing these, men do not know me.

Those who know me are few, and by them I am esteemed.

For the wise man is outwardly poor, but he carries his jewel in his bosom.

LXXI.

The disease of not Knowing. To know one's ignorance is the best part of knowledge.

To be ignorant of such knowledge is a disease.

If one only regards it as a disease, he will be cured of it.

The wise man is exempt from this disease.

He knows it for what it is, and hence is free from it.

LXXII.

Loving One's Self. When men do not have a right fear of present dangers, they run into extremes of peril.

Let them beware of enlarging the house, being weary of their present condition.

If they do not despise it, no such weariness will arise.

This is why the wise man while possessed of self-knowledge, does not parade himself.

He loves but does not value himself highly.

Thus he puts away pride and is content.

LXXIII.

Freedom of He whose courage is expressed in daring
Action. will meet his death.

He whose courage is shown in self-restraint will be preserved.

So that there are two kinds of courage, one injurious and the other advantageous.

But who can say why one of them should incur the judgment of Heaven?

This is why the wise man finds it difficult to act.

The celestial Tao does not strive and yet it overcomes everything; it does not speak, yet is skilful in replying; it does not call, and yet things come to it readily.

It is quiet in its methods, yet its plans are thoroughly effective.

The net of Heaven has large meshes and yet nothing escapes it.

LXXIV.

The fault of When the people do not fear death, of
Coercion. what use is it as a penalty to overawe them?

And if they were always held in the fear of death and I could lay hand upon all wrong-doers and slay them—would I dare to do it?

There is always the Great Executioner!

For one to usurp that office is like a novice cutting out the work for the Great Architect.

Such an one rarely fails to cut his own hands!

LXXV.

The evil of The people suffer from famine because of
Avarice. the heavy taxes levied by their superiors.

This is the cause of their need.

The people are difficult to govern, because of the officiousness of their superiors.

This is the cause of the trouble.

The people make light of dying, because of the great hardship of trying to live.

This is the reason of their indifference to death.

So to keep living altogether out of view is better than making overmuch of it.

LXXVI. §. 65, 66

Warning Man at his birth is supple and tender;
against in death he is rigid and strong.
Strength. It is the same with everything.

Trees and plants in their early growth are lissom and soft, but at their death they are withered and tough.

Thus rigidity and strength are the concomitants of death; but softness and gentleness companions of life.

Hence the warrior, relying on his strength, cannot conquer death; while the powerful tree becomes a mere timber support.

For the place of the strong and firm is below, while that of the gentle and yielding is above.

LXXVII.

The Tao of Like the bending of an archer's bow is the
Heaven. Tao of Heaven.

It brings down that which is high and raises up that which is depressed.

It takes away where there is excess, and gives where there is deficiency.

The Tao of Heaven makes all things equal.

This Tao is not of man.

Man takes away from the needy to add to his own excess.

Who is the man that, having a superabundance, can bring it to the service of the world?

Only he who has the Tao!

This is why the wise man acts without expectation of reward; completes his work and takes no merit.

For thus he hides his wealth.

LXXVIII.

Accepting the Truth. Nothing in all the world is so weak and yielding as water; but for breaking down the firm and strong it has no equal.

This admits of no alternative.

All the world knows that the soft can wear away the hard, and the weak can conquer the strong; but none can carry it out in practice.

Therefore the wise man says, 'He who bears the reproach of his country is really the lord of the land. He who bears the woes of the people is in truth their king.'

The words of truth are always paradoxical.

LXXIX.

Keeping one's Bond. When a compromise is effected after a long dispute, one of the parties remains with a grudge. And how can this be a good settlement?

Therefore the wise man takes his part of the bond and does not insist upon having the other.

The virtuous man attends only to his engagements in the bond, while the man without virtue contrives for his own advantage.

The Tao of Heaven has no favorites.

It always aids the good man.

LXXX.

Standing alone. If I had a small kingdom and but ten or a hundred men of ability, I would not use them.

I would teach the people to look upon death as a grievous thing, and then they would not go abroad to meet it.

Though they had boats and carriages, yet they would not go away in them.

Though they had armour, yet they would never have occasion to put it on.

The people should return to the use of the quippo.

They should find their coarse food sweet, think their plain clothes beautiful, regard their homes as places of rest, and take delight in their own simple pleasures.

Though there might be a neighbouring state within sight, and the crowing of the cocks and the barking of the dogs might be heard by us, yet my people would grow old and die and feel no need of ever having intercourse with it.

LXXXI.

*Evidence of
Simplicity.*

Sincere words are not grand.
Grand words are not faithful.
The man of Tao does not dispute.

They who dispute are not skilled in Tao.

Those who know it are not learned.

The learned do not know it.

The wise man does not lay up treasure.

The more he expends for others, the more he has for his own.

The more he gives to others, the richer he grows.

This is the Tao of Heaven, which penetrates all but does not injure.

This is the Tao of the wise man, who acts but does not strive.

End, of the Book of the Path of Virtue.

THE TAO.

SOME thirteen centuries B. C. the religion of the Chinese Empire consisted of a peculiar blending of nature-worship and the worship of ancestors, called Shintoism. Records do not indicate any great tendency to mythological development in connection with this religion. Humanity is the centre of the Universe, being born from the Union of Heaven and Earth. Hence arises the threefold division of the *Shins*, or "Spirits," which the Chinese worshipped.

The first order, that of Celestial Spirits, is headed by *Tshangti*, the Supreme Ruler of Heaven. Beneath him are other five Rulers and a great host of Celestial Spirits, which include the sun and moon, together with the stars, or the Intelligences which are said to control and direct them.

The second order consists of Human Spirits, including the whole host of departed ancestors, and to these the most sincere respect was paid by all true believers in the State-religion of the Tchou-li, and especially by the Tchou dynasty. The human being is said to have two souls, one of which is celestial in its origin and nature, and after death goes to *Tien* (heaven), the other being of the nature of the earth, to which it returns at death. The souls of ancestors, we are told, were worshipped with much sincerity and with many ceremonies, while it was believed that the souls themselves were present at the sacrifices and pageants.*

The third order of *Shins* are Terrestrial or Mundane Spirits, including all manner of Nature Spirits, such as the Gnomes, Undines, Sylphs and "Salamanders," together with a vast number of peculiarly choice blends in the shape of winged beasts, fiery flying dragons and other monsters, which seem to derive their forms from the composition of numerous types from the denizens of the four "elements." These Spirits were said to reside in every kind of visible object and in the bodies of animals, though they were not themselves visible to the eye of man.

* Cf. Jaccolliot, *Occult Science in India*, ch. vi.

In connection with this ancient religious system of the Tchou-li it is important to notice that no mention is made of evil Spirits, and nothing is said of future rewards and punishments, though the power of rewarding and punishing is ascribed to *Tshangti*, the supreme Ruler of heaven. It appears to have been accepted as a matter of natural law that the superior part of man, his celestial soul, went after death to its own sphere, and the inferior part, the earthly soul, to its sphere; but neither was called good or bad, and each enjoyed its own nature, receiving no reward or punishment.

The ancient Chinese had a system of invoking the Spirits of the departed, and these ceremonies were for the purpose of recalling the "soul of the earth" quite as often as the higher soul of an ancestor. They had no order of priesthood, public worship and festivals being conducted by one person who held his office as one of the ministers of the State. Only the Emperor himself might sacrifice to the supreme *Tien*, the Spirit of Heaven: only the Emperor and the princes to the Spirits of the earth and of the harvests, and so on, a regular scale of ministrations being allotted to the various officials, according to their standing in the Empire. There are records, however, of various magical practices, the opinion and advice of the wonder-workers and prognosticators being held in great esteem by the people, while the fact that they were included among the State officials shows that they were among the most intelligent and respected of the land.

This, then, is a brief outline of the State religion to which the system called *Taoism* eventually succeeded. It had its origin with the dynasty of Tchou, as recorded in the book *Tchou-li*, written by Tchou-Kung, brother of the founder of the dynasty, in the twelfth century B. C. Kong-fu-tze (Confucius) to whom further reference will be made, was born of this family some six centuries later. Lao-tze, the founder of the order of Tao-tze, was born in the Tchu principality in the year 604 B. C. He was already in the winter of life when Kong-fu-tze paid a visit to him, in the year 517 B. C., Lao-tze being eighty-seven years of age and Kong-fu-tze thirty-three years. The celebrated Philosopher is said to have been greatly impressed with the old Sage whom he ever afterwards esteemed highly. Lao-tze is said to have visited India among other

places in his many travels, and though the fact is not established, it is nevertheless true that his Philosophy closely resembles the Vedānta in its first principles, while the system of ethics to which it gives rise is so close to the contemporary teachings of Buddha as to be mainly identical. Not much is known to us of the history of Lao-tze, but his teachings are presumably represented in the *Tao-teh-King*, or the Book of the Path of Virtue, which is held to be the most sacred of all scriptures by the followers of this sage. Just as we are indebted to Chuang-tze for a record of the teachings of his Master, Lao-tze, so we owe to Meng-tze (Mencius) that of the philosophy of Kong-fu-tze. But to neither, it would appear, do we owe the preservation of the pure doctrine of either of these two great teachers; for Chuang-tze and Meng-tze, who were contemporary representatives of the two systems, were greatly antagonistic to one another, and strong expressions of disrespect are known to have passed between them and between their respective followers, while it is fairly evident that Lao-tze and Kong-fu-tze were good friends, and at most not far divided on essential points. The Rev. Aubrey Moore* says in regard to this matter:

"It would be interesting to know whether in the undisputed utterances of Lao-Tzū, Quietism and the glorification of Inaction are as prominent as they are in Chuang-Tzū. One would be prepared *à priori* to find that they are not. . . . By the time of Chuang-Tzū. . . . some two or three centuries after Lao-Tzū, Confucianism had become to some extent the established religion of China, and Taoism, like Republicanism in the days of the Roman Empire, became a mere *opposition de salon*. Under such circumstances the antagonism between the representatives of Lao-Tzū and Confucius would proportionately increase."

As I shall have to refer to Confucius and his teachings in the course of this treatise, it may be well to present a few facts concerning him in this place. Born in the year 550 B. C., he was only twenty-two years of age when he began to enlighten the descendants of the Yellow Emperor with his doctrines. His energies were at first divided between the duties of a State officer and his studies, among which we find magic, history, poetry, philosophy and religion, and various other subjects from

*Notes on Philosophy, etc., "Chuang-tze," p. xxv.

as many ancient books. Among those more generally associated with his name are the *Yi-King* (Book of Changes), the *Shi-King* (Book of Poems), the *Li-ki* (Rituals), the *Shu-King* (Book of inscriptions), and *Tshun-tsieu* (Spring and Autumn), these five *kings* or books having been revised, recast, or entirely written by himself. They constitute the famous *Five Kings*, or canonical books, so much in regard by his followers. The unity of mankind, charity and duty to one's neighbour, are among the fundamental doctrines of Kong-fu-tze, and these doctrines were taken up by Meng-tze in the fourth century B. C., as forming the basis of the then popular religious system which he defended through the political and religious troubles that finally led to the fall of its royal patrons, the Tchou dynasty. The teaching of Kong-fu-tze was essentially of the nature of a utilitarian religion, capable of very successful application to political, social, and moral questions, but embodying very little doctrine concerning the nature, origin and destiny of man. This was left to the opposition school of mystical Philosophy called the order of Tao-tze, under the leadership of Chuang-tze. The philanthropic and mundane doctrines of Kong-fu-tze were evidently not entirely satisfactory to the more metaphysical and mystical thinkers of that day in China, for not only did the doctrine of the Tao successfully vie with it for a long time, but the subsequent introduction and widespread acceptance of Buddhism shows that the spiritual side of the Confucian doctrines was too feebly developed to satisfy the needs of a vast number of the Chinese.

Nevertheless the doctrine of Tao did not succeed in gaining anything more than a temporary patronage of some Emperors—such as Hoang-ti, whose name has been erased from the sacred records of the Confucians—and the adherence of a minor portion of the nation. Tao never was the popular or representative religion like Confucianism, and it is not now in repute among the learned men of the Empire. The reason for this is not difficult to find, and it needs only a presentation of some of the leading tenets of the Tao-tze to convince one that it never could be possible for such a mystical Philosophy to find favour with a practical and ambitious nation like the Chinese.

Tao, a term which is said to be equivalent to the Sanskrit Bodh (wisdom or enlightenment) and used by the Chinese Bud-

dhists to express that spiritual state, is among the Tao-tze a mystical term having a twofold significance. It is at once the Supreme Reason, and Nature, the Alpha and Omega of all things, representing the "Diversity in unity" of Nature, and the "Unity in diversity" of God. Here at the outset we introduce the antinomial and paradoxical element common to all mystical systems, and more than ever prevalent in Pantheistic creeds such as Taoism is believed to be. Unity and diversity are yet one, and that one is Tao, and Tao is greater than God and greater than Nature, for in Tao, God and Nature are as one.

Before heaven and earth were, Tao was. It has existed without change from all time. Spiritual beings draw their spirituality therefrom; while the universe became what we see it now. To Tao, the zenith is not high, nor the nadir low; no point in time is long ago, nor by lapse of ages has it grown old.*

Lao-tze makes a distinction between the Supreme Source of all things, Tao the ineffable, and Nature, which is the Mother of everything. Tao, the Supreme Source and essence of the Universal spirit, self-existent, uncreate and eternal, the origin of all creations, and of all worlds, as of the Gods who made and govern them, is, says Lao-tze, "by nature, One."

One and universal is Tao, but the first has produced a second, and the second a third, and these three are all things. In vain may your senses enquire concerning all these; your reason alone can frame anything respecting them and this will tell you that they are only One.†

Tao, in this sense, seems to correspond to the *Parabrahm* of the Esoteric Philosophy, the *Ain Suph* of the Kabalists, the *Athyf* of the Egyptians, and the Monad of the Greeks. Lao-tze says :

A man looks upon God as his father, and loves him in like measure. Shall he then not love That which is greater than God?

Hence it appears evident that Tao is not God, nor Nature, yet is greater than either, being All. The idea of this universal, unchangeable Essence, is not often better conveyed than in the lines of Swinburne :

I am that which began ;
Out of me the years roll,

* *Chuang-tze*, p. 76.

† Kenealy, *Book of God*, i. 36.

Out of me God and Man,
I am equal and whole ;

God changes and man, and the form of them bodily ; I am the Soul.*

Says Lao-tze :

There is an Infinite Being which existed before heaven and earth. How calm it is ! how free ! It lives alone, it changes not. It moves everywhere, but it never suffers. We may look on it as the Mother of the Universe. I, I know not its name. In order to give it a title I call it Tao. When I try to give it a name I call it Great. After calling it great, I call it Fugitive. After calling it Fugitive, I call it Distant. After calling it Distant, I say it comes back to me.†

Lao-tze taught that the use and end of life consisted in the worship of this Tao in its Bi-une nature of Father-Mother, and that this worship of, and final union with, Tao could only be effected by means of *teh* (virtue), which proceeds from it. Totally unlike the active doctrine of Confucius, based upon "charity and duty to one's neighbour," the Tao-tze recommended the practice of restraining the senses, so that the quality of *teh* might flow unimpeded through the mind and the greatest influence of human thought be used for good without recourse to speech or action, in all matters of a spiritual nature ; for speech and action according to them led finally to dogma, false doctrine and deceit ; to diplomacy, interference and tyranny. The pure Tao of Lao-tze must be distinguished at the outset from the later teachings of the sect of Tao-tze who have gradually detracted from the high morality of that doctrine which dispensed with morals, and added much that was quite foreign to its pure ethical simplicity.

If this be understood, we may at once pass on to examine some of the teachings of the Chinese mystic which remain to us in the records of Chuang-tze, the Ezra of Taoism, and the Democritus of his own day in China. Chuang-tze, the Idealist, led the reaction against materialistic Confucianism, and it is to him that we owe our knowledge, however incomplete, of the teachings of Lao-tze, and the doctrine of the Tao. If the enthusiastic disciple has extended the philosophy of his Mas-

* *Songs before Sunrise* : "Hertha."

† *Intro. Sc. Relig.*, Müller, p. 249.

ter far beyond the original statement of the doctrine which "could not be taught in words," the error is one which, fortunately, we are not called upon to rectify. Chuang-tze, has given us the first and only record, and therefore we may remain content by calling it "the best." Then too, if this Philistine has sometimes called in the Samson of Utilitarian Philosophy in order to "make sport with him," we have the satisfaction, small though it be, of knowing that the laugh was not always against the blind man. The inherent beauty and power of Chuang-tze's writings, their quaint cynicism and effusive wit, not less than the subtlety of metaphor so aptly linked to vigour of expression which characterizes his works, have placed them in the foremost rank of Chinese literature. But now to review the teachings themselves.

First then with regard to the doctrine of the "essential unity of things," Lao-tze recommends us to use the light that is within us "to revert to our natural clearness of sight," for everyone is held to be born in Tao, from Tao; hence the saying: All that a fish requires is water, all that a man wants is Tao.

The "union of impossibles" which is attributed to the Platonic Philosophy alone, is in Taoism the basic doctrine. It is called the "Axis of Tao." Hui-tza is quoted as saying:

The objective emanates from the subjective; the subjective is consequent upon the objective. This is the Alternation Theory.

To this Chuang-tze adds,

Nevertheless, when one is born, the other dies. When one is possible, the other is impossible. When one is affirmative, the other is negative. Which being the case, the true sage rejects all distinctions of this and that. He takes his refuge in God, and places himself in subjective relation with all things. . . . When subjective and objective are both without the correlates, that is the very axis of Tao. And when that axis passes through the centre at which all Infinities converge, positive and negative alike blend in an infinite One. Hence it has said there is nothing like the light of nature.*

The fact that the view-point of the thinker does not alter the nature of "things-in-themselves," constitutes the main argument for the essential unity of all things. Nothing can be added to or taken from one, while that "one" is all, and that

* *The Writings of Chuang-tze*, H. A. Giles (Translator), Quaritch, London, 1889.

"all" one. Hence the objective and subjective worlds are not separable, being one, and that one being all. Any appearance to the contrary is but *an appearance*, consequent upon the identifying of oneself with one or the other standpoint.

Chuang-tze says :

Only the truly intelligent understand this principle of the identity of things. They do not view things as apprehended by themselves, subjectively ; but transfer themselves into the position of the things viewed. And viewing them thus they are able to comprehend them, nay, to master them ; and he who can master them is near. So it is that to place oneself in subjective relation with externals, without consciousness of their objectivity—this is TAO. But to wear out one's intellect in an obstinate adherence to the individuality of things, not recognizing the fact that they are all ONE—this is called *Three in the morning*. "What is *Three in the morning*?" asked Tzu-Yu. "A keeper of monkeys," replied Tzu-Chi, "said with regard to their rations of chestnuts that each monkey was to have three in the morning and four at night. But at this the monkeys were very angry, so the keeper said they might have four in the morning and three at night, with which arrangement they were all well pleased. The actual number of the chestnuts remained the same, but there was an adaptation to the likes and dislikes of those concerned." Such is the principle of putting oneself into subjective relation with externals. Wherefore the true Sage, while regarding contraries as identical, adapts himself to the laws of Heaven. This is called following two courses at once.*

It need not escape our notice while enjoying the wit of this illustration, how fitting is the symbolism employed. Speaking of the subjective and objective worlds, with the number "seven" as representing the totality of things, what more apt illustration could be used than "three in the morning and four at night," with a basic identity in the nature of things thus divided ? †

Things are what they are, not by reason of the names we give them, but by reason of their natural affinities and antagon-

* *Ibid*, p. 20.

† *Note*.—The Triad and the Quaternary, symbols of Spirit and Matter, are almost universally associated with the opposing kingdoms of Light and Darkness, good and evil. The "night" here spoken of is the mystical incarnation of Deity during the period of *Manifestation* in the world of matter ; the "Morning" being the period of the return of all things to the *Statu quô ante* of pure Spirituality.

isms, and hence by reason of the uses to which they naturally may be put. This is the doctrine of *Teh*, or true virtue, for virtue has its basis in freedom and consists in the right use of things. And the right use of things, according to Tao, lies in the natural and unimpeded existence of every form of life. Thus the virtue of a tree is in its growth, the putting forth of leaves and fruit and seed ; but if a tree be trained to make much wood, and the wood be cut to make a coffin, two things have lost their virtue—the tree, in that it has ceased to be a tree, and become in part a coffin ; and the man, who would hoard a carcass and deprive nature of her dues. The flowers simply live, and no one denies that they are beautiful. “The good man confers a blessing on the world by merely living.” This is true virtue, this is to be in Tao.

It was upon these considerations that Lao-tze disagreed with Confucius as to the utility of his doctrine of “charity and duty to one’s neighbour,” because Lao-tze taught that Tao does not declare itself ; *Teh* does not go out of its way to express itself, nor perfect argument to contend with a man ; perfect courage is not unyielding, and neither is perfect charity displayed in action. Virtue consists in being true to oneself, and charity in letting alone.

By the virtue which is not intentional even the supernatural may be subdued, says Lao-tze.*

But charity and duty to one’s neighbour are not essential virtues, but accidentals of virtue, and, as Lao-tze says,

Except a man be perfect he cannot determine their place.

Says the Sage :

All the world knows, that the goodness of doing good is not real goodness. The man of complete virtue remains blankly passive as regards what goes on around him. He is as originally by nature, and his knowledge extends to the supernatural. Thus his virtue expands his heart, which goes forth to all who come to take refuge therein. . . . Issuing forth spontaneously, moving without premeditation, all things following in his wake, such is the man of complete virtue.

Another interesting and agreeable doctrine of the Chinese Sage, and one that is again and again asserted with evident

* Hence the axiom : “The will accomplishes everything that it does not desire.”

conviction, is that of the self-sufficiency of God and Nature, considered as one (Tao).

Tao covers and supports all things. . . . To act by means of inaction is God. To speak by means of action is virtue. To love men and care for things is charity. To recognize the unlike as the like is breadth of view. To make no distinctions is liberal. To possess variety is wealth. And so, to hold fast to virtue is strength. To complete virtue is establishment. To follow 'Tao is to be prepared. And not to run counter to the natural bias of things is to be perfect.

He who fully realizes these ten points, by storing them within enlarges his heart, and with this enlargement brings all creation to himself. Such a man will bury gold on the hillside and cast pearls into the sea. He will not struggle for wealth, nor strive for fame. He will not rejoice at old age, nor grieve over early death. He will find no pleasure in success, no chagrin in failure. He will not account a throne as his own private gain, nor the Empire of the world as glory personal to himself. His glory is to know that all things are ONE, and that life and death are but phases of the same existence !*

The contrast of these teachings, resting as they do on the fundamental idea of the perfection of Tao as embracing the providence of God and the integrity of Nature, with those of the Confucian School—which sought to enrich the mind of man by rationalism, his life by arts and sciences, and his morality by government—is very striking, and nowhere more marked than in those passages in the writings of Chuang-tze which deal with either the nature of true virtue or the end and aim of the virtuous.

Philosophy, it is argued, causes dissensions and fills the mind with doubts ; art, creates appetites which our science cannot satisfy, thus rendering life full of misery, and man an object of pity ; while government, which sets limits upon the actions of man, takes away liberty and destroys the foundation principle of true morality.

It was from considerations such as these, no doubt, that Lao-tze, when in discussion with Kong-fu-tze concerning the favourite doctrine of the latter, gave voice to the following admonition :

The chaff from winnowing will blind a man's eyes so that he cannot tell the points of the compass. Mosquitoes will keep a man

awake all night with their biting. And just in the same way this talk of charity and duty to one's neighbour drives me nearly crazy. Sir! strive to keep the world to its own original simplicity. And as the wind bloweth where it listeth, so let virtue establish itself. Wherefore this undue energy, as though searching for a fugitive with a big drum? The snowgoose is white without a daily bath. The raven is black without daily colouring itself. The original simplicity of black and of white is beyond the reach of argument. The vista of fame and reputation is not worthy of enlargement. When the pond dries up and the fishes are left upon dry ground, to moisten them with the breath, or to damp them with a little spittle, is not to be compared with leaving them in the first instance in their native rivers and lakes.*

No use to regret the state of things "that are not as they were," no use but to inspire the hope that some day we may return to the "childstate we have lost." And the belief that man's departure from the state of "original purity" as it is called, was included in the scheme of human evolution—a belief founded on the mere existence in our world to-day of acquired evils, quite as much as upon the passing realization in ourselves of a divine inflection—this belief, I say, inspires us with the hope of an eventual restoration of mankind to its integrity. Indeed it would seem that the world is in a transition state from the Tao of native purity to the Tao of acquired virtue; from the integrity of primitive innocence, to Tao of ultimate perfection.

This is the view maintained by Edward Carpenter when he says:

Possibly this is a law of history, that when man has run through every variety of custom a time comes for him to be freed from it—that is, he uses it indifferently according to his requirements, and is no longer a slave to it; all human practices find their use, and none are forbidden. At this point whenever reached, "morals" come to an end and humanity takes its place—that is to say, there is no longer any code of action, but the one object of all action is the deliverance of the human being and the establishment of equality between oneself and another, the entry into a new life, which new life when entered into is glad and perfect, because there is no more any effort or strain in it; but it is the recognition of oneself in others, eternally.

* *Ibid*, p. 184.

Lao-tze taught that Tao was only to be attained by the return of man to the true life, which consists in what he calls "fasting of the heart," otherwise defined as "self-abstraction," the "higher indifference" and "non-attachment."

"The pure men of old acted without calculation, not seeking to secure results. They laid no plans. Therefore, failing, they had no cause for regret; succeeding, no cause for congratulation."

For, believing in the absolute perfection of Tao, they did no more than live, "breathing with their whole being," and not seeking "to let the human supplement the divine."

Why all this strain after wealth and power and fame, as if the getting of these were the end and aim of life? Why, indeed, save for the satisfaction of our desires, the desires that have become almost the *needs* of our existence! Would it not be easier for us all to take the counsel of Lao-tze, the advice of Diogenes, and make the effort of our lives the reducing of our wants?

Says Lao-tze :

You are going too fast. You see your egg and expect it to crow. You look at your cross-bow, and expect to have broiled duck before you. I will say a few words at random, and do you listen at random. How does the Sage seat himself by the sun and moon, and hold the universe in his grasp? He blends everything into one harmonious whole, rejecting the confusion of this and that. Rank and precedence, which the vulgar prize, the Sage stolidly ignores. The revolutions of ten thousand years leave his Unity unscathed. The universe itself may pass away, but he will flourish still. How do I know that the love of life is not a delusion after all? How do I know but he who dreads to die is not as a child who has lost the way and cannot find his home?*

This "fasting of the heart" and self-abstraction, by means of which the possession of Tao is effected, is not, as some might imagine, the indifference which has its seat in self-love; except in so far as that love of Self includes the welfare of all things whatsoever. The doctrine of Inaction does not inculcate bodily withdrawal from the world of action. This to certain natures would be to an extent easy of fulfilment, especially in the direction of abstaining from actions that are uncongenial to them.

"It is easy enough to stand still; the difficulty is to walk without touching the ground."

* *Chuang-tse*, p. 29.

It is in the sense of non-attachment of oneself to action or to the fruits of action, that this doctrine is to be understood, since it is not by means of action in relation to oneself that liberation is obtained and Tao realized. An Advaita scripture* says,

By the action of walking a place is reached, but Moksha cannot be said to be reached by any action, for A'tmá is free.

"Foregoing self the Universe grows I," says the *Light of Asia*; and this doctrine of "laying down one's life to save it," is nowhere better explained and illustrated than in the mystical pantheism of the Chinese Sage. Self-abnegation as the road to possession, yet not involving the desire to possess, is thus referred to in the *Bhagavad Gítá*:†

Whoever performs actions dedicating them to the Supreme Spirit and abandoning all attachment, is not touched by sin, as the lotus-leaf is not wetted by water. . . . The right performer of action, abandoning the fruit of action, attains to rest through devotion; the wrong performer of action, attached to the fruit thereof, on account of desire, remains bound. . . . The Spirit creates not for the world actorship, nor acts: nor even the bond between action and its results; but Nature works on.

By acting, while separating oneself from action; and by reaching the fruit of action without desiring it, man ceases to discriminate between good and evil, and finally reaches that state where diversity becomes perceived as unity, and all distinctions cease. Hope is no more, there is nothing unfulfilled; ambition has no aim, for all things are attained: use has lost its virtue, since necessity has ceased; and only Tao itself breathes, breathless, all in all.

"Then sorrow ends, for Life and Death have ceased;
How should lamps flicker when their oil is spent?
The old sad count is clear, the new is clean;
Thus hath a man content."

Then follows the question, Can one obtain Tao for oneself alone?

Can one get Tao so as to have it for one's own? Your very body is not your own. How then should Tao be? "If my body is not my own, pray whose is it?" It is the delegated image of

* *Vichára Sájara*, II, 3.

† Chap. V, 10, 12, 14.

God. Your life is not your own. It is the delegated harmony of God. Your individuality is not your own. It is the delegated adaptability of God. Your posterity is not your own. It is the delegated exuviae of God. You move, but know not how. You are at rest, but know not why. You taste, but know not the cause. These are the operations of God's laws. How then should you get Tao so as to have it for your own ?*

Answers the *Voice of the Silence* :

For this, thou hast to live and breathe in all, as all that thou perceivest breathes in thee; to feel thyself abiding in all things, all things in SELF.

The End.