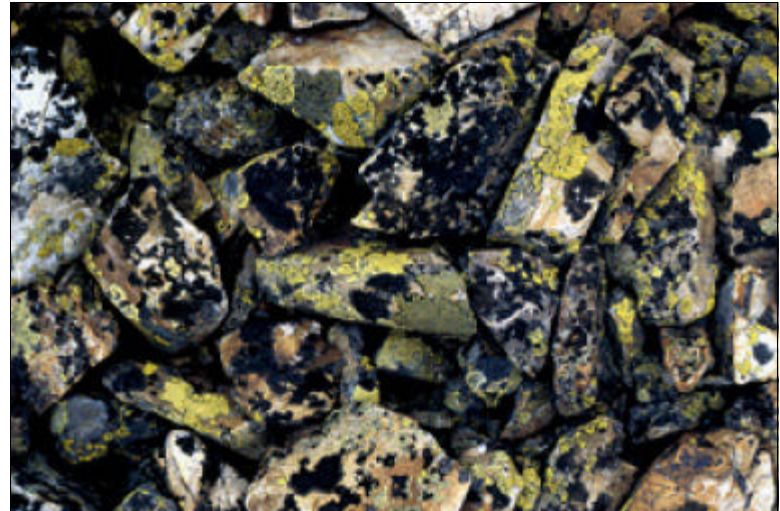


C L A S S I C S O F
I N T E G R I T Y
& T H E W A Y



R E N D E R E D B Y
D O U G L A S A L L C H I N

!

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1

Who would follow the Way must go beyond words.
Who would know the world must go beyond names.

Nameless, all things begin.
Named, all things are born.

Empty of intent, one may be filled with awe.
Full of intent, one may know what's manifest.
One source, different fonts.
Wonders both.

From wonder into wonder,
existence opens.

2

Beauty as beauty? Only with ugliness.
Goodness as goodness? Only with villainy.

Being and non-being arise as one.
Hard and easy,
long and short,
high and low,
text and voice,
before and after
gain meaning together.

A wise man works without ado,
and teaches by example merely.
He creates, not claiming it his own.
He works, not waiting for return.
With deeds complete, he sets no store by them.
When achievements are not owned, neither can they
be lost.

3

Esteem no one especially worthy,
and men are freed from rivalry.
Prize no rarity,
and men are freed from thievery.
Place no treasure where all may see,
and men are freed from envy.

Who governs well
clears minds and fills stomachs,
diffuses ambitions and consolidates bones.
Where hearts and minds are free from want,
no cunning foe can muster discord.

Where no one needs to intervene,
order reigns freely.

4

The Way, how like an empty vessel,
yet it never needs refilling.
Bottomless it is,
like the wellspring of creation.

It blunts sharp edges,
unravels knots,
softens glare,
and settles clouds of dust.

Submerged deeply, obscurely seen.
Who knows wherefrom?
It just echoes from the time before time.

Nature is indifferent,
respecting all creation as straw dogs.*
Wise men are indifferent,
respecting all that humans do as straw dogs.

The hollow between heaven and earth,
how like a bellows it is:
empty, yet inexhaustible.
The more it empties, the more it gives.

Words fill space needlessly.
Hold fast to the center.

The spirit of the valley never dies.
They call it wondrous female.
Through the portal of her mystery
creation ever wells forth.

It lingers like gossamer and seems not to be,
yet when summoned, ever flows freely.

*straw dog: object of sacrifice, created with care solely for that purpose, initially due the utmost deference and reverence, later deliberately abandoned or destroyed.

Heaven endures.
Earth endures.
Never born, they never die,
yet ever do they serve life's ends.

Who counts himself last is summoned first.
Who sheds his own-ness finds oneness in all.
Who never becomes an end in himself
endlessly becomes himself.

Utmost virtue, how like water.
Water gives all creatures life
and flows in lowly places,
ever closer to the Way.

Dwell lowly.
Respect deeply.
Trust freely.
Govern justly.
Work authentically.
Act upon opportunity.

Who does not contend
is free of contention.

The more you draw a bow that's taut,
the sooner your muscles regret the thought.
The keener the edge, the sharper the blade,
the harder it is to keep that way.
As gold and jade accumulate,
ways to safeguard them dissipate.
The higher the rank, the greater the riches,
the greater the load on which fortune hinges.

A full day ends with the setting sun.
Wise men retire when work is done.

Honoring yin and yang,
do you embrace the One?
Focusing your chi within,
are you soft as if newborn?
Tending the mirror dark within,
do you keep it blemish-free?
Caring for the citizenry,
are you unassuming?
As heaven's portals open and close,
do you receive as yin?
As your knowledge grows,
do you still know nothing, too?

Creating, not claiming as one's own,
working, not waiting for return,
guiding, not seeking to control,
such is the wonder of integrity.

Collect thirty spokes on a single hub.

In the empty space the useful lies.

Form a bowl from lumps of clay.

In the empty space the useful lies.

Frame your walls with windows and doors.

In the empty space the useful lies.

So:

Advantage comes from what is there,
usefulness from what is not.

Too many colors overwhelm the eye.

Too many sounds flood the ear.

Too many flavors numb the palate.

Gambling and sport overtake the heart.

Prized possessions overtake the mind.

Therefore,

a wise man attends to his needs

and not his senses.

He releases what is without

for what is within.

Anticipating favor brings distress.
To guard against disgrace gives stress no less.
Best be startled by neither.

Misery befalls the self.
No self, no misery.
Just so for rank and misfortune.

Who does not rank himself above all else,
 may be entrusted with an empire.
Who graces all creatures as himself,
 may be given custody of the world.

Look: you cannot see it,
 for it is invisible.
Listen: you cannot hear it,
 for it is inaudible,
Grasp: you cannot hold it,
 for it is intangible.
Each as unfathomable as the next,
these three become as one.

It threads into the gateway of wonder
and returns again to nothingness.
The form of the formless, the image of the imageless,
elusive and beyond imagination.

From above, there is no light reflected.
From below, no shadow cast.
From before, there's not a thing to meet,
From behind, no thing to follow.

Mindful of one's primal roots,
one floats along the Way.

The ancient adepts of the Way,
 how subtly engaged,
 how cryptically perceptive.

Yet fragments of their wisdom linger:
 Alert, as if treading over icy streams.
 Cautious, as if threatened by neighbors.
 Considerate, like a welcome guest.
 Fluid, like melting ice.
 Simple, like an unhewn block.
 Open, like a valley.
 Tumbling, like turbulent waters.

Who finds quiescence while turbulence settles?
 Who is astir before the moment is ripe?

Who does not want fulfillment
 may be incomplete and threadbare.

Let emptiness fill you.
 Let stillness reign within.

Now,
 as creation unfolds, observe its return as well.
 For as all creatures flourish,
 so is each returning to its source.
 All returns to stillness.
 Thus nature is renewed.
 Thus nature endures.

Appreciating the perpetual invites enlightenment.
 Recklessly ignoring what endures invites catastrophe.

Appreciating the perpetual opens the mind.
 An open mind fosters perspective;
 perspective, transcendence;
 transcendence, divinity;
 divinity, oneness with the Way:
 the Way which is everlasting.

Even as bodies die and decay,
 the Way will ever be the Way.

Who leads well, the people never notice.
Next, comes one they cherish;
next, one they fear;
last, one they revile.

A leader who gives trust earns trust.
His profile is low, his words are measured.
His work is done when all proclaim,
"look what we've achieved!"

When once the Way was lost,
humanism soon appeared.
As ingenuity emerged,
so did subterfuge, as well.
As families dissolved,
new codes of duty formed.
The country now in disarray,
authorities arose
and order was enforced.

Be free of learnedness, renounce what's told,
and all will benefit a hundredfold.

Be free of "charity," renounce what's "right,"
and natural affections will reignite.

Be free of shrewdness, renounce what's dear,
and thieves and bandits will disappear.

These three alone will not suffice,
thus honor these as well:

Be simple, like an undyed cloth,
authentic, like an unhewn block.

Be free of self.

Be free of want.

Be free of all that's taught as true,
and thus be free of troubles, too.

Twixt yea and nay,
how much difference to convey?

Twixt good and bad,
how much difference to be had?

Whom others fear
ought others fear.

How very vexing,
it's all so perplexing!

Others revel in life,
celebrating and going places.
Still am I, and give no sign,
as if a newborn yet to smile.
—And I, I with nowhere to return.

Others have stuff, more than enough.
—While I, I have nothing.

A fool in deed, a fool indeed.

Others seem so clear,
while I, I seem so lost.
Others seem so alert,
while I, I seem so plain.

As nebulous as the ocean wide.
Adrift to every breath of wind.

While all seem busy toward some purpose,
I am plainly good for nothing.

Ah, to be unlike the masses!
To engulf nature whole
and be engulfed by her!

Integrity means to follow the Way, fully the Way,
ever so elusive and ineffable.

Elusive and ineffable!

—and yet it holds true form.

Ineffable and elusive!

—and yet it holds true substance.

How close, how dark, how deep within!

—and yet it holds an essence,
a touchstone of one's faith.

Since antiquity, its name has been preserved,
an echoing of how all things began.

How can one know of things so remote?

—By what is deep within.

Yield and be preserved.
Bend and be restraigthened.
Empty and be filled.
Exhaust and be renewed.
Have little and be enriched.
Have much and be overwhelmed.

The sage holds fast to integrity
and shows the Way for all to see.
Not displaying himself, he shines as an example.
Not promoting himself, he is known by all.
Not crediting himself, he is recognized,
Not lauding himself, he is remembered.

He does not compete,
hence no one can get the better of him.
Just so:
Who yields is preserved.

Nature works without words.
Just so for men.

No windstorm lasts all morning.
No downpour lasts all day.
Nature cannot sustain them.
Just so for men.

Who follows the Way is one with the Way.
Who expresses integrity is one with integrity.
Who welcomes loss is one with less.

Who lifts himself too high can't hold a stance.
Who takes too giant a stride can't make advance.
Who gives himself the credit eclipses others finding
merit.
Who prides himself on end soon finds himself without
a friend.
In every instance such as these
the voyager on the Way can see
excess baggage and goods none need.

What's not in nature's economy,
abandon for integrity.

Something there once was,
vaguely formed, yet complete unto itself,
emerging afore heaven and earth,
without voice, without dimension,
without otherness, without change,
whence all things were born.
Who knows its name?
I know it as "the Way."
If name there be,
then call it "Great".
—for great means ever-flowing,
ever-flowing, hence far-reaching.
Far-reaching, it may come full circle.

The Way is great,
heaven is great,
earth is great,
and so is the man of integrity!
Men accord with earth,
earth with heaven,
heaven with the Way,
and the Way upon itself unfolds.

In gravity is levity grounded.
In stillness is unrest mastered.

Provisions weigh down a journey,
 yet wise men travel not far without them.
Amusements beckon beyond the walls,
 yet wise men calmly stay at home.

Who travels well leaves no trace.
Who speaks well leaves no discord.
Who reckons well leaves no tally.

Who secures well uses neither board nor lock,
 yet what he closes, no one can open.
Who binds well uses neither cord nor knot,
 yet what he binds, no one can undo.

Who follows the Way well
leaves none untended,
leaves none behind,
leaves naught to waste.
 Such is listening to the light within.

Good men are to bad men teachers.
Bad men are to good men responsibilities.
Who does not respect his teacher,
 or his responsibility,
whatever else he knows,
wants wisdom.
 Such is the subtle essence.

Knowing the masculine,
embrace the feminine.

Be a channel for all under heaven:
integrity will ever flow through you
and return you to the state of a newborn.

Knowing honor,
embrace humility.

Be a valley for all under heaven:
integrity will ever flow towards you
and return you to the state of an unhewn block.

Knowing whiteness,
embrace the dark void.

Be a guide for all under heaven:
integrity will never mislead you
and will return you to the everlasting.

When hewn, the native block is fashioned into tools,
tools which serve the interests of the few.
A wise man knows how not to hew.

Some men try to seize the world
and shape it as they please,
but how can they succeed?
The world is a vessel complete unto itself.
Who tries to shape it, fails.
Who tries to grasp it, loses.

Some creatures plunge ahead, some pause behind.
Some breathe in fits, some breathe more gently.
Some resist, some yield to danger.
Some fill themselves, some become empty and hollow.

A person of integrity endeavors ever to be free:
free of extremes,
free of excess,
free of extraordinary extravagance.

Who serves a ruler with the Way
refrains from force of arms.
For who wields weapons, weapons can betray.

Where troops have camped, the brambles grow.
Where war has raged, the harvest's low.

Who leads an army well resolves his purpose,
absent force, absent reward.
He meets the purpose, not to boast of power.
He meets the purpose, not to bask in fortune.
He meets the purpose, not to brag with glory.
Rather, he meets the purpose with full regret
because the purpose must be met.

All things flourish, then decay.
One cannot ever force the Way.
What goes against it soon dies away.

Weapons bode not well.
All creatures under heaven fear them.
Who follows the Way honors them not,
and adopts them only at the last.

Who prizes peace will not prettify a weapon.
Who prettifies a weapon finds delight in slaughter.
Who finds delight in slaughter is not fit
to steward creatures under heaven.

How should a commander in war position himself?
—Where he can see the sadness, not the triumph.
When many people die, one weeps in sorrow.
To mark a victory, mourn what is lost.

The Way is ever nameless,
a modest the unhewn block.
Yet none dare not respect it.
If one instilled its simpleness,
 all things in nature would acquiesce.
Heaven and earth would reunite.
 A gentle dew would fall.
Peace and order, unenforced,
 among the people would reign.

When once the block is hewn,
 things multiply and names ensue.
Knowing when to end
 frees one from peril.

All under heaven is received into the Way,
like valley streams cascading to the sea.

Who understand others has knowledge.
Who understands himself is enlightened.
Who overcomes others has power.
Who overcomes himself has strength.
Who values just what suffices is rich.
Who perseveres has strength of purpose.
Who finds where he belongs, endures.
Who leaves memories when he dies, lives on.

How great the Way,
like a flooding river flowing left and right!
Holding nothing back, it gives to all in need
and makes no claim upon them.

All creatures return to it, yet it rules none:
 how small it seems.
It rules none, yet all creatures return to it:
 how great it seems.

By never seeking greatness,
greatness comes.

Cultivate the void.
Hold fast to the center.
All creatures will pass your way,
for in stillness no harm dwells.

Voyagers pass by way of music and fine food.
To them how bland the Way will seem.
Looking, you cannot see it.
Listening, you cannot hear it.
Yet when summoned, it ever flows freely.

What one would reduce
first stretch to its limit.
What one would weaken,
first consolidate.
What one would cast down,
first elevate.
What one would seize,
first forsake.
Such is subtle insight.

To the flexible and yielding
the hard and strong give way.

No more than a fish out of water
should one see a ruler's hand at work.

The Way is ever nameless.
When leaders of the land respect it,
all creatures of themselves transcend.
If yet intent should well,
invoke the nameless unhewn block.
Nameless, they will be free of want.
Ever simple, they will be filled with wonder.
Whereupon all will be well with the world.

Integrity never concerns those who express it,
yet obsesses those who ache to possess it.

With integrity one has no motive and does not act,
and nothing's left undone.

With humanism, no motive still, and though one acts,
nothing is disturbed.

With justice one has a motive and also acts,
and much is left undone.

With rectitude one acts, and when no one responds,
he rolls his sleeves and coerces them.

When the Way is lost,
it yields to integrity,
integrity to humanism,
humanism to justice,
and justice to propriety.
So do trust and order wane,
reduced to florid protocol,
wherein nonsense blooms.

Greatness dwells in substance, not in surfaces,
in the fruit and not the flower,
in releasing what is without for what is within.

Long ago, many attained oneness.
Heaven became pure.
Earth became firm.
Spirits became endowed.
Waterways became full.
Men became guides.

Now,
without clarity, heaven would collapse.
Without firmness, earth would burst.
Without power, spirits would wane.
Without fullness, valleys would run dry.
Without guidance, communities would dissolve.

Greatness springs from a humble font.
Towers spring from modest foundations.
Thus true leaders profess their lowly roots
and postures to serve.

Too much renown will lead to ruin.
Thus glisten not like polished jade.
Be solid like unhewn rock.

The Way moves unpredictably
acting with each opportunity.

All creatures are of being born,
while being is of non-being born.

A wise man once he hears the Way
begins to practice right away.
A common man who hears the Way
will heed it some, not every day.
A fool who hears just laughs out loud,
by which one knows the Way's endowed.

To quote old sayings:

"The path to enlightenment seems dim."

"The way ahead seems like regress."

"Easy solutions seem hard to find."

"Utmost virtue feels incomplete."

"Abundant virtue feels unrewarding."

"The backbone of virtue feels limp."

"Plain truths go unappreciated."

"Great talents go unrecognized."

"The perfect form has no shape."

"The perfect square has no corner."

"The perfect music has no sound."

The Way is hidden and without name,
yet brings fulfillment just the same.

From the Way came one,
from one came two,
from two, a few,
and then a sum,
until a myriad had come.
All these creatures,
with yin on their backs and yang in their breasts,
live by harmonizing their vital breaths.

A commoner is loathe to admit,
while leaders openly submit,
their humble roots or low repute.

One may gain by loss,
and lose by gain.

As reflection confirms
what others affirm,
so all may learn:
"Who lives by the sword, dies by the sword,"
for "as you live, so shall you die."

Water, ever fluid,
erodes the most resistant rock.
While what is insubstantial
penetrates the densest block.
Without ado,
non-action demonstrates what it can do.

Wisdom without words,
deeds without doing
are realized by very few.

Fame or no-name,
 which means more?
Self or wealth?,
 the choice is yours.
With or without,
 think either-or.

Pursuing pleasures will meet great cost.
Amassing treasures will meet great loss.

To know good measure frees a man from shame.
To act in good measure frees a man from claim,
and so he endures.

Great perfection seems to need repair
 and yet its usefulness is not impaired.
Great fullness seems like empty air
 and yet its usefulness is everywhere.

Great directedness may seem wayward.
Great mastery may seem haphazard.
Great eloquence may seem awkward.

Movement stirs the cold.
Stillness calms the heat.

When purity and stillness reign,
all things under heaven gain.

When the world follows the Way,
metals form plows and horses draw them.
When the world fails the Way,
metals form swords and horses bear them.

No chancre's more vile than craving,
no curse more viscious than discontent,
no crime more grievous than coveting.

How men suffer from want!
want of knowing what suffices.

Never venturing abroad,
one may know the world entire.
Never casting forth one's gaze,
one may see the Way of heaven.

The farther one goes,
the less one knows.

Know, without stirring.
See, without looking.
Work, without doing.

To pursue what's known, learn ever more each day.
To pursue the Way, do ever less each day.

Release. Renounce. Let go. Divest.
Fill every moment with less and less.
And when at last nothing is done,
then nothing also is left undone.

The world will not be ruled by intervening.
Follow nature's course to seek its meaning.

Who keeps his own mind to follow
with mind enough among his fellows?

Respect the good.
Respect the evil, too.
 Such is respect.
Trust the faithful.
Trust the untrue, as well.
 Such is trust.

A wise man disappears himself,
and appears to all confounded and wild.
With every eye and ear upon him,
he exudes the innocence of a child.

Of every ten who journey,
three are living, blind to death,
three are dying and find no life,
and those cascading unto death
while clinging still to life
are three as well.
They all engage in life-and-death.
Now one among the ten, they say,
 is sure of life along the way.
He never hides from tigers
 when walking in the mountains.
He never puts on armor
 when walking into battle.
The tiger's claw, the enemy's blade,
 they cannot penetrate or harm him,
for this one has no place for death to enter.

The Way conceives them.
Integrity receives them.
Matter allows them.
Nature endows them.

All creatures thus respect the Way
and honor its Integrity.
No one demands that this be so.
Their respect by nature ever flows.

The Way gives birth to them and nurtures them.
It shapes them, develops them,
shelters them, strengthens them,
sustains them, preserves them.

Creating, not claiming as one's own,
working, not waiting for return,
guiding, not seeking to control:
 such is the wonder of integrity.

All things began as One, the mother of the world.
Knowing the mother, you may know the offspring.
Hence you may return to the Source
and dwell beyond the fear of death.

Close your heart
and shutter all entries:
 your life will ever be filled.
Open your heart,
let concerns run wild:
 your life will never be stilled.

Finding significance in the small is insight.
Yielding against pressure is strength.

Use the light without to be enlightened within,
 lest you invite catastrophe.
Such is cultivating the perpetual.

With little wisdom still I set upon the Way,
my only fear to go astray.
The path is low and fit to follow,
yet how men love to wander!

While fields are filled with weeds,
while granaries are bare,
some revel in fine clothes,
fine wine, fine food,
and altogether more than they can use.
Such is robbery, not the Way.

What is well rooted will not topple.
 What is well embraced will not escape.
 What is well remembered will not fade
 as generations pass.

Cultivated in the self, integrity affirms.
 Cultivated in the family, integrity enriches.
 Cultivated in the village, integrity endures.
 Cultivated in the nation, integrity abounds.
 Cultivated in the world, integrity pervades.

Understand another as yourself.
 Understand a family as a family,
 a village as a village,
 a nation as a nation.
 Understand the world as the world.
 How does one understand things so vast?
 By what is deep within.

One filled with integrity—
 how like a hardy newborn!
 No venomous bug will sting him.
 No bird or beast will seize him.
 His bones are soft, his muscles weak,
 and yet how tight his grasp!
 He knows not union, male and female,
 and yet how much aroused!
 Vitality is at its peak.
 He cries full vent the whole day through,
 and yet is never hoarse.
 His harmony is at its peak.

Harmony means constancy.
 Constancy means insight.

Living fully bodes well.
 Thus, regulate the vital breath.

To live robustly, then decline:
 such is not the Way.
 What follows not the Way, soon ends.

Who knows does not use words.
Who uses words does not know.

Close the heart,
shut all entries,
soften glare,
settle the dust,
blunt sharp edges,
unravel knots,
and know the wonder deep within.

Who offers neither intimacy nor distance,
benefit nor harm, honor nor disgrace,
all under heaven value.

Govern a country with common acts.
Wage a war with uncommon acts.
But win a world with absence of acts.
How does one know this?
By what is deep within.

The more the proscriptions,
the poorer the people.
The craftier the tools,
the greater the confusion.
The smarter the skillful,
the sooner the strangeness.
The harsher the laws,
the more men will break them.

Wise men say:
I do not intervene
and the people tend themselves.
I cherish stillness
and the people settle their differences.
I do not engage in exchange
and the people prosper.
I seek to be free from want
and the people on their own become
authentic unhewn blocks.

With anarchy, people are ever so honest.
With bureaucracy, people are ever so cunning.

Good fortune on misfortune rides.
Misfortune in good fortune hides.

Who can guide himself without a compass?
Standards become extraneous.
Virtue becomes vicious.

How long have men been deluded
while integrity eludes them!

Be square but not pointed,
sharp but not cutting,
straight but not intrusive,
bright but not glaring.

In governing men and serving heaven,
nothing exceeds economy.

Through economy,
one pursues the Way anew.

Following from the start
means ever more integrity.

With a reservoir of integrity,
no challenge is too great.

When nothing blocks the way,
one knows no limits.

A man without limit
is fit to lead all.

As a font for all,
he long endures.

Such is rooting deeply and growing firm,
the Way of long life and lasting vision.

The people, like crystal:
handle with care.

When leaders express integrity,
dark forces find no potency.
Not that darkness has no power,
but it will do no harm.
Not that it can do no harm,
but no one's left in harm's way.
Neither harms the other:
integrity on both accounts.

A great land is a basin towards which all rivers flow,
a receiver of all here below,
the female spirit of the world.
The receiver ever claims dominion through her
stillness.
Still, she has reached the lowest place.

Lying low before a smaller land,
a greater land may win it over.
Lying low before a greater land,
a smaller land may win it over.
Each wins the other by being lower.

A great land is greater still when serving ever more.
A small land is better served when serving what is
great.
Each benefits the other,
by which the greater land may see its lowly role.

The Way holds sanctuary for all creatures,
a treasure for the true, a refuge for the erring.

Deft words earn favor,
fine works reward.
Let inept works and inapt words receive no less.

When leaders are installed or ministers appointed,
in pomp are reins of power bestowed.
Wiser to withdraw and without ceremony
bestow the Way upon the land.

The ancients said:
"Seek and you shall find."
"Err and be free from fault."
Thus all may value the Way.

Work without *doing*.
Manage without interfering.
Relish the mundane.
Respect the small as great.
Regard the few as many.
Repair insult with integrity.

With difficult tasks, attend to the easy.
With daunting feats, attend to the small.

All big problems were once easy to solve.
All great deeds were once small to begin.

Never anxious for greatness, the person of integrity
achieves the monumental without effort.

Who is quick to promise
can't meet all his commitments.
Who imagines all things easy
finds difficulty at every turn.

A wise man respects the challenge in every act,
thus nothing ever gets the better of him.

What is secure is easily held.
 What's not yet sure is easily quelled.
 What is brittle is easily shattered.
 What is little is easily scattered.

Dissolve a problem before it comes near.
 Establish order lest chaos appear.

A tree that fills a man's embrace
 begins as a seedling at its base.
 A nine-layered terrace finds its birth
 in modest basketfuls of earth.
 A journey to a distant land
 begins with a step from where you stand.

Who acts may rue it.
 Who grasps may lose it.
 A wise man never acts, has naught to rue.
 He never grasps, has naught to lose.

How often one fails on the verge of success.
 Be ever mindful in the urge to progress.

A wise man aims to be free of want
 and never values rarities.
 Forsaking what is taught as true,
 he does what others never do.
 He guides all creatures to their natures each
 and never grasps beyond his reach.

The ancient adepts of the Way
 did not teach the people everything,
 freeing them from confusion.

People are hard to govern
 when they have too much learning.

Who governs academically
 deprives the people.
 Who governs sympathically
 enriches the people.
 Between these two is set a measure.
 To respect it always,
 such is the wonder of integrity.
 How deep, how far-reaching!
 It receives all things
 and leads them to great oneness.

Why is the ocean great?
It lies below all waters.
It calls a million streams its own.

To receive high honor,
 posture yourself below others.
To lead others,
 posture yourself behind them.

The person of integrity
stands above others, without oppressing,
comes before others, without offending.
All under heaven ever yield to him.
Because he contends with no one,
no one can contend with him.

How great the Way,
like nothing else!
If it were not beyond compare,
how common it would be.

These treasures three—
 empathy,
 economy,
 humility—
cherish them and hold them close.
Through empathy, one conquers fear.
Through economy, one gives forth.
Through humility, one stewards all.
But courage absent empathy,
generosity absent economy,
leadership absent humility,
invites death within.

Through empathy one wins a war.
Through empathy secure a land.

What heaven brings forth,
compassion sustains.

Who battles well
is free of aggression.
Who fights well
is free of anger.
Who conquers his enemy
is free of encounter.
Who wins over others
is free of arrogance.
Such is integrity with no contention.
Such is finding advantage in others.
Such is meeting with heaven,
long since the ultimate.

Strategists say:
"Rather play the guest than dare to host."
"Rather retreat a foot than advance an inch."

Advance without armies.
Ward off without arms.
Cast out without confronting.
Pursue without weapons.

No misfortune is greater
than mistaking a worthy opponent.
Not thinking your opponent worthy,
you sacrifice your touchstone.

When well matched forces meet,
who sees the loss will win.

These words—
How easily understood!
How easily put in practice!
Yet no one understands them.
No one puts them to good use.

Words have history,
works authority.

Who know the Way, how few.
Who follow, how esteemed.

Who has integrity,
on his shoulders find coarse fabric,
in his bosom a precious gem.

Know well what you know not.
Unlearn what ill you know.
Wellness here, defect there.

A wise man frees himself from defects
by regarding defects as defects.

When no one fears the awesome,
then how great it will appear.

Set no limit on their homes.
Lay no burden on their work.
Without duress, they never weary of you.

The person of integrity
knows himself, yet does not show himself.
He fills himself, yet is not full of himself.
He releases what is without
for what is within.

Who dares and fears not, encounters death.
Who fears and dares not, is bound with life.
In each a deficit, in each an asset.

What heaven decries,
who knows why?

The Way of heaven
contends not yet conquers well,
speaks not yet evokes response,
summons not yet draws all near,
bustles not yet meets its purpose.

Heaven casts
a net that's vast,
and though its mesh is far from fine,
nothing is ever left behind.

When none fear death,
you cannot threaten them with dying.
When all fear death,
none dare transgress under pain of death.

As long as men fear death,
executioners can make a living.

Only one is positioned to take life.
Who is not a master and tries to hew wood
rarely escapes injuring his hands.

Humans hunger
when heavily taxed.
Citizens are unruly
when governors misrule.
People treat death lightly
when nothing's left to live for.

Only one indifferent toward life
is wiser than one ever valuing life.

All living plants, each man alive,
live pliant and will yield.
A plant once dead, a man that's died,
are dry and stiff and hard.
Rigid persons side with death.
Yielding persons side with life.

Armies that cannot yield will lose.
Trees that cannot bend will snap.

The strong and rigid all will fail.
The pliant and yielding will prevail.

How the Way is like stringing a bow!
The upper end is brought down.
The lower end is lifted.
All excess is reduced.
All deficit is restored.

In nature, any surplus flows
to those without from those with more.
Men instead reverse the flow
from those without to those with more.

Only one with integrity has abundance
and shares it with the world.

The person of integrity
works, expecting no return,
completes his task, not dwelling on it,
and rests, content unto himself.

Nothing in the world
is as weak or yielding as water.
Yet nothing works as well
to triumph over hard and strong.

To the fluid and the yielding,
the hard and strong give way.
Many persons know this
yet none put it to good use.

The wise men said:
"Who would suffer all insult, let him rule the land."
"Who would shoulder misfortune, let him care for the
world."

Ah, if true words always rang true!

To what end compromise,
if resentment still survives?
A wise man thus accepts a debt,
and never claims what's due.

The person of integrity
minds what he owes others,
while one without integrity
minds what's due by others.

Judging is not the Way,
yet justice ever wins the day.

Imagine a land, modest in size.
Imagine a people, few in number.
Everyone lives aware of death
and no one thinks to leave.
With all the means to travel far,
no one rides away.
With weapons and armor stored away,
no one is defensive.
Now,
give them rope, they reckon with knots.
Give them simple food, they savor it;
simple clothes, they dress handsomely;
simple dwellings, they feel secure;
simple customs, they find delight.
One can see the nearby land
and one can hear their roosters crow,
still no one ventures forth,
even unto the day they die.

Honest words are not pretty.
Pretty words are not honest.
Ones who know are not learned.
Learned ones do not know.
Who has integrity does not cross words.
Who crosses words has not integrity.

The person of integrity
reserves nothing for himself.
The more he does for others,
the fuller his own self.
The more he gives to others,
the richer he becomes.

The Way of heaven is
to give and forgive not.
The Way of wise men is
to tend and contend not.