

As for the Way, the Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way;

As for names, the name that can be named is not the constant name.

The nameless is the beginning of the ten thousand things; The named is the mother of the ten thousand things.

Therefore, those constantly without desires, by this means will perceive its subtlety.

Those constantly with desires, by this means will see only that which they yearn for and seek.

These two together emerge;

They have different names yet they're called the same;

That which is even more profound than the profound—  
The gateway of all subtleties.

The highest good is like water;

Water is good at benefiting the ten thousand things and yet it does not compete with them.

It dwells in places the masses of people detest,  
Therefore it is close to the Way.

In dwelling, the good thing is the land;

In the mind, the good thing is depth;

In giving, the good thing is being like Heaven;

In speaking, the good thing is sincerity;

In governing, the good thing is order;

In affairs, the good thing is ability;

In activity, the good thing is timeliness.

It is only because it does not compete, that therefore it is without fault.

The good traveler leaves no track behind;  
 The good speaker speaks without blemish or flaw;  
 The good counter doesn't use tallies or chips;  
 The good closer of doors does so without bolt or lock, and yet  
 the door cannot be opened;  
 The good tier of knots ties without rope or cord, yet his knots  
 can't be undone.

Therefore the Sage is constantly good at saving men and never  
 rejects anyone;  
 And with things, he never rejects useful goods.  
 This is called Doubly Bright.

Therefore the good man is the teacher of the good,  
 And the bad man is the raw material for the good.  
 To not value one's teacher and not cherish the raw goods—  
 Though one had great knowledge, he would still be greatly  
 confused.

This is called the Essential of the Sublime.

When you know the male yet hold on to the female,  
 You'll be the ravine of the country.  
 When you're the ravine of the country,  
 Your constant virtue will not leave.  
 And when your constant virtue doesn't leave,  
 You'll return to the state of the infant.

When you know the pure yet hold on to the soiled,  
 You'll be the valley of the country.  
 When you're the valley of the country,  
 Your constant virtue is complete.  
 And when your constant virtue is complete,  
 You'll return to the state of uncarved wood.

When you know the white yet hold on to the black,  
 You'll be the model for the country.  
 And when you're the model for the country,  
 Your constant virtue will not go astray.  
 And when your constant virtue does not go astray,  
 You'll return to the condition which has no limit.

When uncarved wood is cut up, it's turned into vessels;  
 When the Sage is used, he becomes the Head of Officials.  
 Truly, great carving is done without splitting up.