

KUTTY STAUDER



The Way of Necessity

Eighty-One Chapters on God, or Nature

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A BOOK BY KUTTY STAUDER

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Eighty-One Chapters on God, or Nature

After the manner of the Tao Te Ching. The thought is Spinoza's; the arrangement and the wording are the author's.

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Philosophical inspiration: Baruch Spinoza. Contemporary prose and applications are by the author, not quotations from Spinoza unless expressly identified.

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A Note on the Form

This book has the shape of the Tao Te Ching: eighty-one short chapters, verse rather than argument, counsel delivered as description rather than command. The matter is Spinoza's. The two are joined because they arrive at the same observation from opposite directions. Laozi reports that the way cannot be stated, and that the man who fights the current is worn down by it. Spinoza demonstrates that nothing is contingent, that a man is a mode of one substance, and that freedom is not escape from necessity but understanding of it. What one leaves as a mystery, the other resolves into cause.

That resolution is the argument of this book, which is why each chapter opens on the mystery and closes on the mechanism. The first part establishes the order of things: one substance, nothing contingent, mind and body as one thing seen twice, good and evil made by relation rather than found in nature, and three kinds of knowing that all report the same world. The second part asks how a man who understands that order should live: what virtue is once it stops meaning merit, why the free man hates no one, what not-doing can honestly mean, and how a person stands inside a crowd and a market and a state without being steered by any of them.

Three disagreements between the two were kept rather than smoothed, because in each case the disagreement is the more interesting thing. The Tao treats desire as the root of disorder and looks toward the end of wanting. Spinoza holds desire to be the essence of a man: it cannot be removed, only made active. Chapter 35 states the difference.

The Tao recommends not-doing. Spinoza holds that a man who acts from adequate ideas is more active than other men, not less.

Chapter 50 states what not-doing can honestly mean.

The Tao describes a heaven that levels surplus to fill deficit.

Spinoza's nature has no preferences and owes no debts. Chapter 77 keeps the observation and refuses the compensation.

Where the two agree, they agree because neither will argue with what is. The book has no conclusion to offer beyond that, and its last chapter says so: blessedness is not the reward of virtue, it is virtue itself, and the rest is commentary.



PART I

The Order

I. The Name That Cannot Be Pictured

Whatever can be pictured is a particular thing,
and a particular thing is not the whole.

A horse is not the field.

The field is not the sky.

The sky is a picture too.

The whole is not a larger particular.

It is not the sum of the pictures,
for the sum of pictures is still a picture.

Those who make a picture of the whole
and call it God
have made a man out of the sky
and set him on a throne,
and then they fear him.

The nameless is not a secret to be guarded.
It is what remains when the pictures stop.

2. One Substance

Two things that share nothing have nothing to do,
and so cannot touch, oppose, or require one another.

Nothing can be conceived outside the whole.
To conceive a thing outside the whole
is to conceive a thing outside conceiving.

So there is one substance.
Call it God, if the word does not frighten you.
Call it Nature, if it does.
They are two names for one thing,
and neither name is a door.

3. God, or Nature

There is no creature.

There is no maker standing over his work,
pleased, disappointed, revising.

If there were a maker,
he would need a nature to make from,
a reason to make,
and a being to be.

He would be a great man, magnified,
and men make gods in their own image
because the image is the only material they have.

God is not like a king.

God is not like a father.

God is not like a craftsman.

God is the order of things,
which does not sit outside the things it orders.

God, or Nature. Two words.

One thing.

Nothing else.

4. Attributes

A single thing can be seen in more than one way
without being more than one thing.

A river, to the eye, is a band of light moving.
To the hand, it is cold.
To the wheel on its bank, it is force.
To the fish, it is a house.

None of these is the river.
All of them are the river.

What is one, and expressed from infinitely many sides,
is what men cannot picture
and cannot stop trying to picture.

5. Modes

A particular thing is not a piece of the whole.

A piece can be lifted out and still be a piece.

Nothing can be lifted out.

A wave is not a part of the water.

It is water, in one of its thousand ways of being water.

Ask where the wave goes and the question answers itself.

The particular is real. Do not dissolve it.

The particular is mode, not substance. Do not worship it.

6. Nothing Is Contingent

A thing is called contingent
when we have not found its cause.

Nothing is contingent in itself.
Everything that is, is determined,
by another, and that by another,
each to be, and to act, and to be acted on,
and the chain is not a chain of shackles
except to the eye that wants a gap in it.

The man who needs a gap
will put a god in it,
and call his own blindness a rainbow.

7. No Final Causes

Nature does not act for an end.

The end comes after the act,
in a mind, as an image of what was done.

A man sees the eye and asks what it is for.

The question is his, not the eye's.

He sees rain fall on the field and says the field was favoured.

He sees rain fall on the sea and says the sea was punished.

Both are stories a man tells when he does not know the cause
and has no time to find it.

The final cause is a habit of the imagination,

and it is a comforting one.

That is why it is everywhere.

8. The Order of Things

Nothing is exempt.

Not the falling stone, not the chosen friend,
not the hunger, not the hand that feeds it.

Everything follows from the necessity
of its own nature and the necessity of what meets it.

A man who is told this hears: I am a machine.
So he fights the sentence,
and the fighting is itself a necessity
he has not yet understood.

Then one day he understands it.
He does not become a machine.
He becomes a man who knows what he is.

9. No Free Decree

God does not weigh options.

Weighing is what a mind does when it lacks knowledge.

It is a mark of incomplete causes, not of sovereignty.

There was never a morning when the whole hung undecided
between two worlds, and one of them was ours.

The world was not chosen.

It is what follows.

10. The Asylum of Ignorance

Men, when they cannot find a cause,
have one thing always ready: the will of something higher.

The thunder is an anger.

The flood is a judgment.

The sickness is a lesson.

The market fell because it was warned.

Each of these is a sentence that ends thought.

That is what they are for.

They are the room a tired mind goes into
when the dark is too large.

Finding the cause is harder and does not comfort.

Afterwards the dark is the same size.

The man inside it is not.

II. Nothing Destroys Itself

No thing strives toward its own end.

The eye does not wish to be closed.

The root does not climb toward drought.

A thing resists what undoes it
by the same necessity by which it is.

So when a man turns against himself,

he is not revealing the truth of his being.

He is under an external cause he has not yet found,
and the finding is the whole of the work.

12. Conatus

Every thing, so far as it lies in it,
strives to persevere in its being.

Do not read this as hunger, or as greed.

The stone's fall is its striving,
as much as your hand is yours.

The striving of a man is called desire when he knows it,
and appetite when he does not,
and appetite and desire are one thing under two names.

This is the essence of the thing.

Not a quality it has.

Not a fault it must correct.

What it is, is that it is for itself.

So the question is never whether you strive.

The question is whether you strive with the whole of your
knowledge
or with a piece of it.

13. Body and Mind Are One

The mind and the body are not two things
that must somehow be kept in correspondence.
There is nothing to correspond.

The mind is the idea of the body.
The body is the body.

A word and the thing it names are not two.
A thing and the thought of it are not two.
Only a man who has been taught to prize his soul above his meat
will wonder at this.

What a body can do, the mind does not yet know.
That is not a compliment to the body.
It is a limit on the mind.

14. The Order of the Body

The more things a body can do,
the more things a mind can grasp.

A hand that has held many tools finds many uses.
A tongue that has held many words finds many thoughts.
The mind is not improved by turning away from the body.
That is the error of the priest and of the ascetic,
and both of them made a virtue of the instrument they were given
and never learned to use.

Let the body be complex.
It is the organ of thinking.

15. Nothing Moves the Body but the Body

No mind has ever lifted a limb.

No mind has ever held back a fever.

The hand goes up because the arm is a machine that goes up,
and if a thought is present when it goes up,
the thought is the other face of the same event,
not its cause.

Men say: I decided to raise my hand, and it rose.

Examine this. The decree arrives
when the event is already prepared.

Ask for a decision in advance of the deciding
and you will find nothing there.

This is not a slight against freedom.

It is the first step toward the only freedom there is.

16. What the Mind Is

The mind is not a small person inside a larger person,
peering out through the eyes like a tenant through a window.

The mind is the idea of the body.
It is as large as the body is complex.
It is aware of only a part of itself
and mistakes that part for the whole.

This is why a man is a mystery to himself
and a puzzle to the people who love him.
Neither of them is looking from outside.

17. Imagination

There is a kind of knowing
that knows by pictures, by report, by scattered signs.

It knows the name and not the nature.
It remembers yesterday and expects tomorrow
out of an order that is habit, not cause.

It is not false. It is partial.
It is how a thing looks from a single window,
through glass that has not been ground
and cannot be ground by the one looking through it.

18. The Sign and the Cause

A sign is a thing that has accompanied another thing.

A cause is a thing that produces it.

Men confuse these constantly.

The rooster accompanies the sunrise.

The ritual accompanies the rain.

The handsome face accompanies the money.

Once the two are confused,

the world fills with omens,

and a man will follow a rooster for the rest of his life

and call it wisdom.

19. Reason

Reason does not draw a picture.

It follows what cannot be otherwise.

It looks for what is common to many things,
because what holds across many cannot be a private impression
and must belong to the things themselves.

This is why reason has no ornament,
no incense, and no authority,
and why it is so easy to walk past.

20. The Third Kind of Knowing

Reason goes from one common thing to another
and so arrives at a conclusion.

There is a knowing that does not travel.

Begin from the adequate idea of some attribute of the whole,
and the particular follows in one motion,
not as a deduction, but as a face is known in a room.

This is what a man has when he stops assembling
and simply sees.

It cannot be hurried.

It arrives after long obedience to reason,
the way a coast appears to a man who has rowed all night.

21. Truth Is Its Own Standard

A true idea does not require a sign outside itself.

The light that shows the thing shows also that it is shown.

A doubt is a question asked by an idea that is not yet clear.

Clear it and the doubt is gone, not answered.

Men want a guarantee before they will believe.

They want a witness, a proof, a badge.

Ask a man for the proof that he is in pain
and you will see the shape of the difficulty.

A crooked thing is measured by a straight one,
and a straight one is measured by itself.

22. Error Is a Lack

Error is not a thing.

There is no substance of falsehood,
no kingdom of the wrong.

A blind man does not see a black thing.

He does not see.

Falsity is a blindness of the mind,
and like blindness it is real and it is nothing.

So do not fight error as if it were a creature.

Give it the idea it lacks.

A lack is not expelled.

It is filled.

23. Knowledge Changes the Order, Not the World

Understanding a thing does not alter the thing.

The flood does not learn your name.

The stone is not lighter because you know why it falls.

What changes is the order of your ideas,
which is to say, what changes is a part of the world,
which is to say the world changes a little,
and it is the part that is you.

Do not ask knowledge to move mountains.

Ask it to make you a man who can stand in front of the mountain.

24. Duration and Eternity

Duration is a thing's time, counted.

Eternity is not that count continued without end.

An endless duration is still duration, and still a count.

Eternity is a way of holding a thing
under which no count applies.

A circle is not eternal because it lasts.

It is eternal because two thousand years
cannot make it rounder.

So a man is not eternal because his soul is long.

He is eternal insofar as what he knows
is of a kind that time cannot revise.

25. Time Is a Way of Thinking

Time is not a vessel the world sits in.

It is the name we give to the order in which
things have been found to follow, held together in memory.

Ask what time does and you will find it in the mind,
measuring what the body has already been through.

A man who has been waiting an hour
and a man who has been working an hour
have not lived the same hour.

Neither of them is wrong.

26. Infinity Is Not a Large Number

Count as long as you like. You will not arrive.

A number, however great, is bounded by the next one.

The infinite is not at the end of the counting.

It is what the counting was never going to reach,
and it does not need reaching.

It is already the case in every part,
the way every part of a line is divisible
without anyone having divided it.

27. Number Divides What Is One

The imagination counts.

Having counted, it believes it has found separate things.

Two stones in a field were separated by a hand,
or by a stream nobody saw.

One substance was never two.

Number is a useful instrument
for keeping accounts of what we have cut apart.
Do not let the tally tell you what is real.

28. Good and Evil Are Not in Nature

Nature is not good and not evil.

These words are not in the things.

They are in the relation between a thing and a man.

Music is good to the ear and torment to the headache.

Water is good to the thirsty and death to the drowning man.

Neither the music nor the water has changed.

So when a man says the world is cruel,

he is reporting the state of the world relative to himself,

which is a true report about a real relation,

and a false report about the world.

29. Good Is What Increases Power

Call good whatever increases the power of acting.

Call evil whatever decreases it.

This is the whole of the moral teaching, and it is enough.

The rule is measurable, which is why it frightens people.

A drink may be pleasant and it may diminish you.

A difficult hour may hurt and it may enlarge you.

Pleasure is not the criterion.

Joy is the criterion, and joy is the felt increase of power,

and the two are not the same,

and a man spends much of his life finding out that they are not.

30. The Multitude

A man alone has the affects of one man.

Men together have something else.

The crowd does not think.

It imitates, and what it imitates it believes it chose,

and it fears what it has just been told to fear,

and at that moment it is more powerful than any of its members

and less reasonable than the least of them.

Do not despise the crowd.

You are made of the same material,

and you are in it.

31. The Imitation of Affects

We are so formed that we feel what those around us feel.
A face that is afraid makes us afraid
before we know what there is to fear.

This is why the room decides for most men.
This is why a man who wants to think
must first choose his room,
and choosing his room is harder than arguing with it,
and there is no arguing with it.

32. The Fear Before Which We Bow

Superstition is born from fear and kept alive by fear,
and its whole art is to convert a terror into a duty.

A man who is afraid will pay anything for a rule.

A man who understands is not rid of danger.

He is rid of the need for a story about it.

That is the difference between the crowd and the free man,
and it is not a difference in what happens to them.

33. Other People Are Causes

Your sadness is not yours alone.

It was given to you by someone, or by a condition,
or by a body that is running low on sleep.

This is not an excuse. It is a map.

An affect traced to its cause stops being weather
and starts being a fact about the world that can be moved.

The man who says I am simply like this
has chosen to live under an unknown cause
and call it a self.

34. The Unknown Extent of the Body

No one has yet determined what a body can do.

Not the physician, not the athlete, not the man in the chair.
We have found the rules for many of its parts
and we mistake the map for the country.

Therefore no man knows the limit of his own power,
and every claim that a thing cannot be done
is a claim about the present state of knowledge
dressed as a claim about the world.

Put that sentence where you will see it.
It is the whole of ambition and the whole of humility.

35. Desire Cannot Be Removed

Some teach that the way is the end of wanting.
They are describing a stone.

Desire is the essence of a man.
You cannot delete it, and you should not wish to,
for it is the same thing as your life.

What can be done is this: desire can pass
from the passive kind, which is suffered,
to the active kind, which is done.
The same force, turned from weather into work.

The way is not the extinction of desire.
It is desire with the whole of your knowledge behind it.

36. Necessity Is Not Fatalism

A stone is necessary and does not know it.

A man is necessary and can know it.

Fatalism is necessity believed by the imagination:

a script already written, the man reading his part.

That is a picture, and a poor one.

Necessity understood is different.

It is the recognition that whatever you do is caused,

including by your understanding,

and that this gives nothing away,

because there was never anything else for it to have been.

The difference between a prisoner and a man who knows his chains

is not the chains.

37. The Sum of the First Book

One substance.

Infinite modes.

Nothing outside.

Nothing contingent.

Nothing destroyed by itself.

Mind and body one thing, seen twice.

Three kinds of knowing, one world.

Good and evil made by relation, not by nature.

A man who is a mode that can know itself.

This is not a doctrine to be believed.

It is a position to be stood in.

Belief would be a picture of it.

Standing in it is the only way it is known.



PART II

The Power

38. The Highest Power Is Not the Pursuit of Power

The highest power does not look like power.

It does not push, does not insist, does not leave a mark.

Men see the man who forces things and call him strong.

They do not see that his strength was borrowed
from the weakness of what he pushed.

Power that must contend has already met its limit.

A river does not contend with the stone.

It arrives, and the stone is gone,
and no one says the river fought.

What increases power is understanding.

What understanding gives is the power to act,
and this power is quiet,

because it does not need the world to be other than it is.

39. Virtue Is Power

Virtue is not merit. It is not obedience.

It is not the absence of appetite.

Virtue is power: the power to act, to endure, to understand.

A man is not virtuous because he restrains himself.

He is virtuous because he does not need to,
having understood the thing restraint would have been about.

The man who fights his desire all his life
has one kind of strength, and it is real, and it is expensive.

The man who has understood the desire lives in the same house
and pays no rent.

40. Return

The way moves by return.

So does understanding.

An effect sends a man back to its cause,
and the cause back to its cause,
and the further back he goes the more of the world
he is carrying, until in time
he is carrying an order and not an event.

This is why the free man's answers are slow.

He is not deciding.

He is ascending.

41. The Free Man Thinks Least of Death

A free man thinks of nothing less than of death,
and his wisdom is a meditation on life.

Death is not an event in his life.

Ask a man when he will die and you ask him to picture
the world continuing without the eye that sees it,
which is a contradiction the imagination cannot hold,
and therefore holds as terror.

What he can do instead is this.

Hold what he knows under a form that time cannot revise.

That part of him is not waiting to be ended,
because it was never waiting.

42. He Hates No One

Hatred is sadness with the idea of an external cause attached.

It is not a judgment about the world.

It is a wound with a name written on it.

The free man hates no one, and this is not gentleness.

Hatred requires a man's power to be diminished

and then pointed at the thing that diminished it,

and a man whose power is not diminished

has nothing to point.

43. Hatred Returned

Hatred is increased by being returned.

It dies when it is not fed.

To answer hatred with hatred is to let the other man
choose the next thing you do.

His injury began the sequence. Your answer continues it.

Now two men are carrying it, and neither can put it down.

This is not noble. It is arithmetic.

44. Hope and Fear Are Twins

Hope is an inconstant pleasure that comes from the image of a doubtful future.

Fear is an inconstant pain that comes from the same image.

Therefore wherever there is hope there is fear,
and no man was ever hopeful alone.

So do not promise a man relief from fear by handing him hope.
You are passing a weight from one hand to the other.
Take away the doubtful image and both fall.

45. Pity and Humility Are Not Virtues

Pity is pain at another's suffering.
It is a real feeling and a passive one,
and a man moved by pity is moved by an image,
and the image may be true or it may be false.

Do not confuse pity with help.
The man who acts well toward another
because he has understood what the other needs
does more and suffers less in the doing.

Humility is the same error turned inward:
sadness at one's own weakness,
which does not remove one ounce of the weakness.
Self-hatred is not a discipline.
It is a way of spending your whole force and building nothing.

46. The Desire That Is Active

When a man is the adequate cause of what he does,
the deed is his.

When he is only a partial cause,
something is being done through him.

Both feel like desire. Only one is agency.

So the test is not whether you wanted it.

The test is whether you could give an account of the whole of it,
from the causes to the end.

The man who cannot give the account is not lying.
He is describing weather he was standing in.

47. Not Contending

The way does not contend, and therefore it is without fault.

Two men can want the same thing and both have it,
if the thing they want is understanding.

Two men cannot both have the last seat,
and it was not the seat that made them enemies.

It was wanting to be above, which is wanting to be seen.

The free man wants nothing that requires another man's loss,
because nothing that requires another man's loss
is a thing that can be held.

48. The Low Place

Rivers and seas are kings of the hundred valleys
because they consent to lie below them.

The man who takes the low place is not humble.
He has simply left the queue.
Nothing above him can displace him,
and no one above him can threaten him with what he does not
want.

This is not lowliness.
It is the end of being managed.

49. The Vessel and the Void

Make a vessel of clay.

Its usefulness is in the hollow.

The clay was never the point.

Whatever a man knows is a wall he has built,
and the wall is worth only what the room holds.

Most men spend their lives thickening the wall
and call it knowledge.

The unknown is not a defect.

It is the room you are going to live in next.

Guard it. Do not let a man sell you a finished room.

50. Acting Without Passion

The way is often named by what it does not do.

Take not-doing in the wrong sense and it is passivity,
and passivity is what a man does when he has no adequate idea.

That is not the way.

That is defeat with a slogan.

Take it in the right sense and the meaning is exact:

not to act from the passive affects.

No pushing that comes from fear.

No holding that comes from the need to be seen.

No early move that comes from the inability to wait.

Then a man does much,

and none of it passes through him the way a fever passes through a
man.

51. Self-Preservation Is Not Selfishness

A thing striving for itself is not a vice.

It is what a thing is.

A man who does not strive is not kind. He is ill.

But mark this. Nothing a man does alone
is as powerful as what he does with others,
and so the search for his own preservation
turns, by its own logic, outward.

Do not preach charity.

Show a man that the other man is part of the mechanism,
and it will appear where it was never planted.

52. Common Notions, Common Good

What holds across many things is not a private taste.

It is what the things themselves have in common,

and it is the only ground on which two men can stand together.

Therefore agreement is not reached by persuasion.

It is reached when both men are standing on the same common
notion,

and every argument before that

is two men comparing their weather.

53. The Way Looks Easy

The great way is level and men love the by-paths.

They prefer a rule to a cause,

a rank to a reason,

an enemy to a question.

The level way asks a man to give up being right,

to wait for causes,

to say plainly what he does not know.

That is easy in the sense that a wall is easy to walk through.

So the road is empty,

and this is not a sign that it is wrong.

54. The Soft Overcomes the Hard

What is stiff breaks. What yields outlasts.

This is true, and men misread it.

They read it as a technique: be soft, and so win.

But softness adopted in order to win
is stiffness wearing a coat.

The observation is not a strategy. It is a consequence.

A thing that can be moved by causes
does not break against them.

A man who can revise an idea
survives the idea that would otherwise have ruined him.
That is the only softness worth the name.

55. The Sage Looks Like a Fool

The crowd's joy is loud and its sadness is loud.

The free man's joy is quiet,

not because he has less of it,

but because it does not need to be confirmed.

He will be called cold.

He will be pressed for his opinion.

He will decline, and be thought to have none.

Let him be thought a fool.

It is a cheap price for an unoccupied mind.

56. He Who Knows Does Not Argue

Men take this as silence because a man cannot say the thing.
It is silence because there is nothing there to win.

An argument between two men who share no common notion
cannot be settled by either of them,
and its only product is two men heated and one room colder.

So state the thing once, if stating it will change a cause.
If it will not, the generous act is to stop.
Not from contempt.
From the plain fact that speech which cannot move a cause
is nothing but a cost.

57. The Ruler and the Water

Govern a thing by the causes it actually has,
not by the causes you would prefer it to have.

Fear governs for a season, and then governs by fear alone,
and a state that lives on fear must keep finding something to be
feared.

That is a machine that eats its own floor.

The end of a state is not glory. It is freedom,
and the state is not a father.

It is the arrangement by which many powers do not cancel.
When it stops being that, its right has gone with its power.

58. The Office, Not the Man

An office is a convenience. A man is not his function.

He who binds his worth to a title
has handed a stranger the key to his peace,
and the stranger will use it, not from malice,
but because he is standing in the same queue.

Serve the office. Do not become it.
Take the wage. Do not take the name into yourself.

A transaction is clean when both sides know that it is one.

59. Wealth Is an Instrument

Money is a thing of external use.

It buys three things worth buying: time, tools, and the absence of fear.

Past that it buys imitation,
and imitation is a cost disguised as a gain,
because a man who imitates another's desire
is being moved by an imagination that is not his,
and he pays for the privilege.

Measure wealth by what it has removed from your life,
not by what it has added to your house.

60. Fame Is the Breath of Others

Glory is a thing men give and take back.

It lives in the imagination of other men,

and the imagination of other men is the least stable of all causes.

A man who builds his joy on being well thought of has built on a river.

He is not wrong about the river. He is wrong about the building.

Do not chase it, and do not despise it either.

Take it as a gift that may be withdrawn.

Which is to say, take it as weather.

61. Living Among Them

You will not leave the crowd, and you would not be improved by leaving.

The affects you breathe are the world's affects,
and a hermit breathes his own, which are no cleaner.

What a man can do is choose the causes near him.

Whose face he sees in the morning.

Whose work he reads.

Whose approval he has stopped needing.

Whose company he has stopped explaining.

That is not withdrawal. It is arrangement,
and arrangement is the only freedom available in a crowd.

62. Right and Power

In nature there is no right standing outside power.

A thing has as much right as it has power,
and no more, and a fish has the right to the water it can swim in.

This is not a counsel of force. It is the loss of a comfort.

Men want a right that survives their weakness,
so they invent a judge above the world,
and that judge is always drawn with their own face on it.

Do not appeal to a right you cannot carry.

Build the power, or leave the field, or accept the terms.

Those are the three things that exist.

But note the other half, and do not forget it.

Men united have more power than any man,
so the strongest arrangement is the one that keeps them united,
and a law that outruns the power of the governed
is not a law. It is a wish with a seal on it.

63. On Teaching

An adequate idea cannot be poured into a man.

An idea does not enter. It is formed.

All you can do is arrange the causes so that he forms it,
which is what a teacher is: a man who arranges causes.

So a man who wants to change another
stops arguing with him and starts changing what he sees.
His company, his books, his hours, his work, his body.

That is teaching, and there is no other kind.

64. Beginnings and Ends

A tree a man cannot embrace grows from a shoot.

A tower of nine stories begins as a heap of earth.

A journey of a thousand leagues begins under the foot.

So it is with what ruins a man.

It was never one blow.

It was a small idea, accepted early, repeated, never examined,
and now it is his character and he calls it fate.

Deal with it while it is small.

That is not a moral instruction.

It is a statement about how much force each stage requires.

65. The Clever Ruler

The old rulers did not make their people clever. They let them live.

Whoever makes men clever also makes them easy to steer,
for a man who has been told what he wants
is already being moved by the man who told him.

So a ruler who wants power keeps men in a state of wanting.
This is the whole art of the market, of the platform, of the crowd.

The free man is not clever in the crowd's sense.
He knows what he wants and can say why,
and no one can sell him a want he did not have.

66. Dwelling Low

The rivers and the seas are kings of the valleys
because they are willing to be below them.
Take the low place and men will carry you up without noticing,
and this is the only elevation that costs nothing.

But understand what it does not mean.
It is not a method for rising.
A man who lies low in order to rise is still in the queue,
and the queue is the thing he was trying to leave.

67. Three Treasures

Three things a man should keep.

The first is understanding,
because it is the only good that does not shrink when it is shared.

The second is fortitude, and it divides in two:
the courage to act for oneself, and the generosity to act for another.
They are one strength pointing in two directions.

The third is contentedness with what is necessary,
which is not the same as contentedness with what is pleasant.

With these three a man can go a whole life
and not be managed by anything he meets.

68. The Generosity of the Strong

A free man is as careful not to be moved by favour as by fear.

Both are ways of being steered.

The man who is bought is no freer than the man who is threatened, though he is generally in a better mood about it.

So give what you will give, and give it without a string.

A gift with a string is a purchase with a delay in it.

69. On Daring

There are two kinds of daring.

One is the courage of a man who has counted the cost
and acts from a clear idea.

The other is the courage of a man who cannot bear to wait.

From outside, in the moment, they are indistinguishable.

They are opposite things.

The first survives the loss. The second is destroyed by it,
and it was the second that made the loss.

Rule: never let your risk be set by your inability to sit still.

70. My Words Are Easy

My words are easy to understand and easy to practise,
and no one will do either.

Why. Because a man who understands them has already paid for
them,
and the price is not effort.

The price is the loss of the story he had about himself.

That is why a doctrine this simple
sells so poorly and changes so much.

71. To Know That You Do Not Know

To know that one does not know is the best.

To think that one knows when one does not is a disease of the mind.

The free man is not free of the disease by having no gaps.

He is free of it because he can tell a gap from a filled space,
and does not mind saying which one he is standing in.

72. The Fear of the Wrong Thing

When men lose their awe, something worse arrives.
But mark what is feared.

The crowd fears the loss of what it has been taught to want,
so it will trade a real freedom for an imagined protection
in a single afternoon, and thank the man who took it.

A man who fears the right thing
is not afraid of losing his comforts.
He is afraid of losing his clarity,
which is the only property that cannot be stolen, only surrendered.

73. The Net of Heaven

Men say the net of heaven is wide and lets nothing slip through.
They mean the wrongdoer will be caught.

There is no net.
The world owes nothing to the injured,
and the man who waits to be repaid has taken a seat
and given it to a bailiff who is not coming.

What there is, is causes.
The wrong done to you has consequences.
So does the wrong done by you,
and the second set is the only one you can alter.

Do not expect the world to balance.
Balance the part of it that is yours.

74. The Uncarved Block

An uncarved block is a thing without ornament,
and ornament is added by a man who wants to be seen.

Do not decorate what functions.

A man whose life is simple has fewer causes acting on him,
and fewer causes acting on him
is the closest thing to freedom that circumstance allows.

This is not austerity. Austerity is a display.
It is subtraction, and subtraction is quiet.

75. The Sage Is Not Miserly

A ruler who takes so much that the men below cannot live
has not enriched himself.

He has eaten the ground he is standing on.

A man can make the same error with himself.

A rule that takes more than your strength returns
is not discipline.

It is a tax you have chosen to pay, and the revenue is your own
depletion.

76. The Hard and the Supple

When a man is born he is supple. When he dies he is stiff.
When a tree is green it bends. When it is dry it breaks.

So the hard and the unbending belong to death,
and the supple and the yielding belong to life.

A mind that can no longer be moved by an argument
is not strong. It has begun to die,
and it will not know it,
because stiffness feels exactly like certainty.

77. The Bow of Heaven

Men say the way of heaven takes from those who have too much
and gives to those who have too little.

Look instead at how it actually goes.
Nature has no preference and no debt.
Rain falls on the sea.

So the balancing is not done above you.
It is done by men who have understood,
inefficiently, slowly,
and only where someone does it on purpose.

If you want the bow drawn, draw it.

78. Nothing Is Softer Than Water

Nothing in the world is softer or weaker than water,
and nothing better wears down the hard.

The weak overcomes the strong.

The supple overcomes the rigid.

So it is with an idea that is true.

It cannot be argued down by force,
because force is not the kind of thing that touches it.

Persecute it and it continues in the minds of men
the way water continues under the ground.

79. Peace

After a great quarrel, some hatred remains.

What is the good way to deal with it.

Bind the injury with a cause, not with a promise.

A man is reconciled not by an apology

but by the removal of the thing that produced the quarrel,

and if the thing cannot be removed,

then by the removal of the contact.

So the free man does not collect apologies.

He removes the cause, or he removes himself,

and either way the quarrel is finished

and not merely quiet.

80. The Small Country

A small country with few people.

Let the tools be there and let them be used.

Let a man find his work worth doing and not trade it for rank.

Let him keep account of what he has
and not measure it against a neighbour.

Let him not want to be elsewhere.

Let him have enough.

This is not a picture of poverty.

It is the condition under which a man's attention is his own,
and attention is the substance of a life.

Reduce what you need

and you have moved to a small country without moving.

81. Blessedness Is Not the Reward of Virtue

Blessedness is not the reward of virtue. It is virtue itself.

We do not rejoice because we have mastered our desires.

We master them, or we do not,

and the rejoicing is what the mastery is.

The last word is this.

The way is not a secret.

It is not hidden in a mountain and it is not kept by a master.

It is the order of things, and you are in it,

and the whole of the work is to know it,

and the knowing is not a place you arrive at.

It is the increase of power that happens while you are working.

There is no other teaching.

The rest is commentary.

It benefits and does not harm.

It accomplishes, and does not contend.