

The *Dàodéjīng*: A 2022 Translation

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Received: June 22, 2021

Accepted: October 11, 2022

Online Published: October 23, 2022

doi:10.5539/ach.v14n2p

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ach.v14n2p>

Abstract

This paper is divided into two sections. The first section presents an English translation of the *Dàodéjīng*. The second section offers an in-depth analysis and explanation of that translation. This paper presents both the standard Chinese version of the *Dàodéjīng*, attributed to Wáng Bì, and a reconstructed version based on the Mǎwángduī manuscripts, with the inclusion of appropriate punctuation, such as commas and full stops. Two key aspects of this paper's commentary that may differ from previous works are: first, the *Dào* is defined as an action or movement within emptiness—imperceptible to the naked eye—that has brought all life into existence and continues to sustain it. Therefore, the translation of Lǎozǐ's cornerstone philosophy could be a play on words, where wúwéi 無為 not only takes wú 無 to mean “no” or “non” but also takes wú to mean “emptiness.” The translation of wúwéi may therefore be rendered as “emptiness in action,” referring to the subtle, unseen movements occurring within emptiness. The second aspect is in relation to dé 德. The English and Confucian meaning of virtue is having high moral standards. Lǎozǐ's dé appears to have had little to do with morals in the modern sense of the word. From the five “virtues” mentioned by Lǎozǐ, it is evident that his concept of virtue was grounded in adherence to the principles of *Dào*. This paper, therefore proposes that the dé can be translated as “quiescence.”

Keywords: Daodejing, Daoism, Chinese philosophy, translation

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The goal of this paper is twofold: the first is to present a translation of the *Dàodéjīng* as close to the original text as possible. This has been attempted before, of which it appears that three translations stand out in particular: Chan (1963), Lin (1994) and Chen (1998). The second purpose of this paper is to publish it as an open-source text—freely available and easily accessible to all readers, regardless of their knowledge of Chinese—and to serve as a general framework for future research.

In terms of this paper's commentaries, it has one specific aim, which is to comment on the ideas and concepts within the *Dàodéjīng* based only on lines from the *Dàodéjīng* itself. Many of the *Dàodéjīng* commentaries out there are generally based on personal opinion and not on what Lǎozǐ wrote. There are occasional standout papers by people who have analysed *Lǎozǐ* by using *Lǎozǐ*. Two such standouts are Henricks (2000) and Murphy (2006).

1.2 Significance

This translation has been created to help shed new light and different angles on what is one of the world's most famous philosophical texts. It seems as though in the 1990s, just about anyone and everyone was translating the *Dàodéjīng*. Fast forward another twenty-five years or so, and it is quite the opposite, where sinology journals have little interest in a new *Dàodéjīng* translation. The issue is that finding a correct translation is still quite rare, with some of the least satisfactory translations coming from the Western academic sinology community. Even today, some Western scholars teach and write extensively on Chinese Studies—covering areas such as language, history, and philosophy—despite not speaking Mandarin fluently or having spent significant time in China.

This brings about the question, what is a “correct” translation of the *Dàodéjīng*? One could start answering this question by asking, what are the requirements needed by a native English speaker to translate the text? The author would suggest the following four skills are probably a useful starting point: (1) Understanding the intricacies of one's native language. (2) Having the ability to speak, read, and write Mandarin at a level that only comes with spending many years in China or Taiwan. (3) Formal university studies in ancient Chinese

language (古代漢語). (4) An exceptional understanding of ancient Chinese culture and thought, through the practical and academic study of various ancient Chinese arts and philosophies. By having achieved these four skills, the translator will most likely have the ability to read the *Dàodéjīng* in its original language and make sense of it.

Once the translator has these basic requirements, they may need the following: (1) To find the *Dàodéjīng* texts in Chinese as close to their original versions as possible. This will require one to cross-reference an enormous number of *Dàodéjīng* texts. Chinese scholars themselves are commonly guilty of interfering with the *Dàodéjīng*. It is difficult to find an exact Wáng Bì or Mǎwángduī version that has not been obviously altered by adding in characters, changing existing ones or omitting some altogether. (2) One will need to get hold of a large number of ancient Chinese dictionaries, modern and old, so as to determine the correct meaning in the Chinese language first, before looking for an English translation. (3) The translator will need to find as many different commentaries on individual word meanings in Chinese as possible to compare and contrast. (4) After this, the translator will need to read about a hundred years of *Dàodéjīng* translations in English and look for themes of correction and change in the scholarly development and pursuit of a better translation.

This brings back the original question of what is a “correct” translation of the *Dàodéjīng*? The author would argue that seven main points are required, with many other nuances also needed. (1) A direct translation, which means one does not choose words that confirm a translator’s opinion in regard to what he or she thinks Lǎozǐ is saying. Many Western translators are guilty of either adding in their own words, changing words to help a difficult translation or completely changing what Lǎozǐ wrote so as to convey how they personally interpret him. (2) To stay away from words/sentences that have a connotation attached to them, such as biblical-like sentences; “thou shalt” or equate Lǎozǐ’s philosophy to modern scientific words/principles. (3) To keep the grammar as close to the original text as possible. By changing the ancient Chinese grammar to fit modern English grammar, it is extremely easy to change the entire meaning of a sentence. (4) To be careful not to translate an ancient Chinese word using a modern Chinese one. (5) Translating according to an ancient Chinese mindset. By understanding ancient Chinese language and culture, and reading the *Dàodéjīng* in Chinese, one may be able to grasp how Lǎozǐ saw the world. The way he viewed the world was probably very different from the way a modern person does. (6) Making an incorrect translation; this may seem like an obvious point but some translations are simply incorrect. One very basic example is how many older translators used “Old baby” for the translation of Lǎozǐ without understanding that zǐ 子 is a type of respectful suffix added to sage-like “masters.” (7) A translator should also endeavour not to use odd and unusual words. One such example is to use “boomerang” instead of “return” for guī 歸. There are occasionally characters like dé 德 that may require a very special word selection and translation but characters like this in the bigger picture of the *Dàodéjīng* are outliers to the norm.

1.3 Methodology

This paper is divided into two sections. Section one provides a straightforward translation of the *Dàodéjīng* into English, while section two offers an in-depth analysis and explanation of that translation. The methodology described below applies to section two.

This paper’s translation is based on the standard Wáng Bì version, which is the “newer” version of the *Dàodéjīng* as opposed to the older ones found in the Mǎwángduī manuscripts. This paper includes both Chinese versions of the standard Wáng Bì and reconstructed Mǎwángduī lines of the *Dàodéjīng* with the addition of appropriate commas and full stops. Currently, there are no grammar standards within China, and the contemporary methods of adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, and full stops can sometimes be unusual. It does seem as though adding more commas than what one would in English helps in understanding a Chinese text better. This paper has underlined the characters that vary in the Chinese Mǎwángduī version compared to the Wáng Bì. There is a “#,” where the Mǎwángduī version does not incorporate a character that the standard Wáng Bì version does. Where there are obvious changes from the Wáng Bì, in that the meaning has some clear differences, the Mǎwángduī version has been translated into English.

Readers may notice that sometimes, “the” is in square brackets and sometimes not. The author has kept [the] in square brackets where it is added as a word. “The” without square brackets is used where it is part of the original Chinese grammar. Where there are normal brackets, they are used to help understand the preceding word/s. In regard to Chinese words within the text, they have not been put in italics as they already have the tones, making them stand out clearly as non-English words.

For the Mǎwángduī version, this paper uses the acronym MWD. As both the Mǎwángduī and Wáng Bì versions of the *Dàodéjīng* within China’s various major publishing houses tend to have inconsistencies, mistakes, and are

varied in character choice, this paper has endeavoured to recreate a Chinese version of the Mǎwángduī *Dàodéjīng* (or more accurately *Dédàoīng*), by combining both versions A and B, to help fill any gaps that each may have. Whether it be version A or B, if the character matches the Wáng Bì version's character, this paper will take that as the one to use. This paper also mentions obvious character variations between the two Mǎwángduī versions. In places where the Guōdiàn (A, B and C) version is obviously different from the other two texts, it is mentioned in the footnotes.

In researching and preparing this paper, the following *Dàodéjīng* translations have been reviewed in detail: Addiss and Lombardo (1993), Allchin (2002), Bahm (1958), Balfour (1884), Blakney (1955), Bryce (1984), Chan (1963), Chen (1998), Cheng (2000), Clatfelter (2015), Cleary (1991), Correa (2005), Cronk (1999), Crowley (1975), Dicus (2002), Donohue (2005), Duyvendak (1954), Fex (2006), Goddard (1919), Gorn-Old (1904), Heider (1985), Henricks (1989), Ho (2002), Kline (2003), Kromal (2002), LaFargue (1871), Lin (1948), Lin (1949), Lin (1977), Lin (1994), Liu (2002), Mabry (1994), MacHovec (1962), Mair (1990), Marshall (2006), Martin (1999), Maurer (1985), Mitchell (1991), Muller (1991), Ni (1979), Ould (1946), Roberts (2001), Rosenthal (1984), Sarbatoare (2002), Schmidt (1975), Shimomissé (1998), Solska (2005), Star (2000), Taplow (1982), Walker (1995), Wei (1982), Welch (1998), Wing (1986), Wu (1961), Wu (1989) and Wu (2013).

In terms of the sources used for the Chinese versions of the Wáng Bì, Mǎwángduī and Guōdiàn, this paper has used many different texts and cross-referenced them against each other. The reason for this is that under great scrutiny, all copies have many different variations in their characters and gaps. This paper focuses a little extra on the use of characters (and gaps) in the Wáng Bì *Dàodéjīng* from the Phoenix Publishing House (Wang, 2017) and the online work of Hilmar Klaus' (2005) Mǎwángduī and Guōdiàn. In regard to the Wáng Bì version presented in this paper, it is probably quite close to the original. The Mǎwángduī and Guōdiàn versions within this paper though, can be seen as a work in progress that future scholars can adjust, change, and correct where necessary.

As the goal of this paper is to do a direct translation from Chinese into English, it may be important to mention the difficulties in trying to achieve this. The first is in dealing with the simplicity (in terms of grammar) of the ancient Chinese language compared to modern English or Chinese. You will notice many added grammar words in this translation, which have been done with square brackets, otherwise the constructed sentence would not make sense to English readers. Due to the lack of vocabulary in ancient Chinese when compared to modern English, sometimes the English sentences may seem overly basic in word choice. This is done purposely to keep it as Lǎozǐ wrote it. Another issue is that because the grammar (in terms of word order and sentence structure) of Chinese and in-particular that of ancient Chinese is different from English, some sentences, if translated directly would simply not make any sense at all. Therefore, this paper has tried to keep some form of harmony in the writing by sometimes omitting Chinese grammar words or adding in English grammar words.

1.4 A Note on This Paper's Commentary and Key Translations

In terms of the commentary, the two key aspects that may be somewhat different to previous works are that this paper defines the Dào as that action (or movement) within emptiness that cannot be seen with the naked eye but has brought all life into existence and also maintains it. Therefore, the translation of Lǎozǐ's cornerstone philosophy could be a play on words, where wúwéi 無為 not only takes wú 無 to mean "no" or "non" but also takes wú to mean "emptiness." The translation of wúwéi could therefore also be "emptiness [in] action," which refers to the actions that are happening within emptiness, which cannot be seen by the naked eye. It is these unseeable actions that can do anything (無不為), for they created everything we see in the world today. To return to the Dào as a person is to return to this original state of being, which is one of stillness, quiet and tranquillity. As the *Dàodéjīng* may have been created as a text primarily for rulers, it does appear that Lǎozǐ's cornerstone philosophy for ruling was based on the idea of letting things take their natural course and to not interfere too much.

The English and Confucian meaning of virtue is having high moral standards. Lǎozǐ recommends following nature's example and using its principles as the way to live. Just as nature can seem very harsh and certainly lacking in morals, in the human sense of the word, Lǎozǐ said, treat the people like (sacrificial) straw dogs. Lǎozǐ's dé 德 had little to do with morals in the modern sense of the word. From the five "virtues (see pg. 160)," as mentioned by Lǎozǐ, it can be seen that Lǎozǐ's virtue was based on following the principles of Dào. If multiple words can be used, the translation for dé may be: someone who adheres and lives by the principles of the Dào, or the principles of naturalness. Simply put, someone who has the qualities of the Dào has dé. This makes translating dé extremely difficult as one needs to find a word that has the "qualities" of Dào in its meaning or at the very least, the qualities of naturalness or non-action. This paper, therefore proposes that dé can be translated

as “quiescence.” A common translation for the *Dàodéjīng* is *The Classic of the Way and Virtue*. In this case, the translation would be, *The Classic of the Way and Quiescence*.

Throughout this paper, there is one word that has not been translated: “Dào.” This word has specifically been written with its tone throughout the paper, except for in the English translation section. The reason for this is that with its tone attached, it is clearly conveyed as a non-English word. The tonal mark is taken away in the English translation to recognise it as an English word. This paper recommends that while “the way” is an acceptable translation for the Dào, no English word is equivalent to the word Dào, and therefore, just as English has always incorporated new foreign words into its vocabulary, so should the Dào become incorporated as “Dao.” The word “Tao” is specifically not used as it promotes an incorrect “T” sound as opposed to the correct “D” sound used in the Northern Chinese Mandarin dialect.

1.5 A Note on the *Dàodéjīng* and its Background

Discussing the *Dàodéjīng*'s background in-depth is beyond the scope and goal of this paper. This paragraph and the one below only aim to give a very brief introduction in regard to the author's observations after translating the text. In terms of taking the *Dàodéjīng* as a historical text as opposed to revering it in a way that it was written by a god-like figure, it is possible to notice some peculiarities. In ancient China, it was a common practice for philosophers to try to promote their “how to govern a state” philosophy or literature to the kings of states.¹ The *Dàodéjīng* appears to be one such text.

Another point to make is that the Guōdiàn and Mǎwángduī versions of the *Dàodéjīng* clearly have many errors, while the Wáng Bì version has many corrections. Errors based on word sounds over character meaning are one such example. Combine this sound and character issue with the fact that the *Dàodéjīng* also has much repetitiveness within the chapters, and there are hints that it may not have been written by a single person but instead by numerous authors over a long period of time, and may also have come from oral transmission. For now, there is no substantial evidence to suggest that Lǎozǐ existed (Mair, 1990, pp.119-130). For the ease of writing within this paper, “Lǎozǐ” has been used in the singular form, instead of the plural, which is probably the more appropriate form. The words *Lǎozǐ* (the original name of the text) and *Dàodéjīng* are used within this paper as interchangeable titles, as the text has gone by both names. After the discovery of the Mǎwángduī scripts, the text could also now be called the *Dédàoīng* due to the flip in the order of chapters.

2. English Translation

Chapter 1

The Dao that can be the Dao is not the constant Dao. The name that can be the name is not the constant name. Nameless, the start of the sky and the earth. To have a name, the mother of ten thousand things.

Therefore, constantly with no desire, so as to observe its mysteries. Constantly to have desire, so as to observe its border. These two come out the same, yet are named differently, both are called the profound. Profound and even more profound, the gate to all mysteries.

Chapter 2

When everything that is underneath the sky all know beauty to be beautiful, thus there is already ugliness. When all know good to be good, thus there is already not good. Therefore, to have and not have mutually create, difficult and easy mutually become, long and short mutually shape, high and low mutually lean, voice and sound mutually harmonise, front and back mutually follow.

So, the sage dwells in the affairs of non-action and teaches by doing and not speaking. The ten thousand things do, yet there is no decline, to produce, yet not to have, to act, yet not depend on, to accomplish, yet not to reside in accomplishment.

Now, only because there is no residing in accomplishment, so there is no loss.

Chapter 3

Do not esteem the worthy, so the people will not contend with each other. Do not value hard to get goods, so the people will not become robbers. Do not show things that can be desirous, so the people's hearts are not in a mess. So, the sage manages by emptying the heart, filling the abdomen, weakening the will and strengthening the

¹ It is sometimes mentioned that the *Dàodéjīng* came in opposition to Confucianism but this seems highly unlikely, as the ideas of Confucius were not accepted by the feudal kings at the time, hence, Confucius' ideas were simply not put to use in his lifetime.

bones. Constantly make the people not know and have no desire, make those now who have wisdom dare not act. Act through non-action, thus nothing is not managed.

Chapter 4

The Dao is like an empty utensil, yet in use it is not filled. Like an abyss ah, it is like the ancestor of the ten thousand things. It subdues the sharp, unties the entangled, harmonises the bright and is the same as the dust. Deep ah, it is like it perhaps exists. I do not know whose child it is, its form precedes God.

Chapter 5

The sky and the earth are not benevolent, so they treat the ten thousand things to be like straw dogs, the sage is not benevolent, so he treats a hundred surnames to be as straw dogs. Between the sky and the earth, it is like a bellows. Empty, yet it is not exhausted, moving, yet more goes out. Lots of talk is to be quickly poor, it is not like abiding by the centre.

Chapter 6

The valley spirit does not die, it is called the profound female. The gate of the profound female is called the root of the sky and the earth. Continuously it seems to exist, in use though, it is not diligent.

Chapter 7

The sky lives long, the earth is old. The sky and earth are so able to live long and be old because they do not live for themselves, therefore, they are able to live long. So, the sage puts his body behind, yet his body is in front, he puts his body on the outside, yet his body lives. Is this not because he is not for the self? Therefore, he can complete himself.

Chapter 8

Superior goodness is like water, water is good at benefiting the ten thousand things because it does not contend. All its dwellings, people find ugly, therefore, it is almost at the Dao.

A good dwelling is with the earth, a good heart is an abyss, good partaking is benevolent, good talk is trustworthy, good uprightness is done with good management, good affairs are handled with good abilities, good activities are done with good timing.

Now, only because one does not contend, therefore, one does not commit any fault.

Chapter 9

To hold, yet fill, it is not like before. To temper, yet sharpen, it cannot be preserved a long time. To fill a hall with jade and gold, there is no capability to guard it. To be rich, yet proud, brings self-loss and its own blame. After a deed is satisfied, the body withdraws, this is the sky's Dao.

Chapter 10

Can you bring the ethereal and corporeal souls together as one and are you able to do it with no separation? Concentrate your energy to attain softness, can you be like an infant? In cleaning and eliminating the profound inspection, can you have no blemish? In loving the people and managing the state, can you do it with not knowing? In opening and closing the sky's gate, can you be the female? In understanding the four reaches, can you do it with not knowing? Produced and raised. Produce, yet not to have, to act, yet not depend on, to grow, yet not to slaughter. This is called profound quiescence.

Chapter 11

Thirty spokes together make a single hub, by its emptiness, the vehicle has use. Mould clay so as to make a vessel, by its emptiness, the vessel has use. Chisel a door and window, so as to make a room, by its emptiness the room has use. Therefore, in having, so lies the benefit, in emptiness, so lies the use.

Chapter 12

The five colours cause a person's eyes to go blind. The five sounds cause a person's ears to go deaf. The five tastes cause a person's mouth to go bland. Galloping horses and hunting cause a person's heart to go mad. Hard to get goods cause a person to do harm. So, the sage does with his abdomen and does not do with his eyes, therefore, he leaves that and gets this.

Chapter 13

Take favours and humiliations like surprises, value great troubles like the body. What is called take favours and humiliations like surprises? Humiliations are below, to get them is like a surprise, to lose them is also like a

surprise, this is what is called taking favours and humiliations like surprises. What is called value great troubles like the body. Because I so have great troubles, so I have a body, if I did not have a body, what troubles would I have?

Therefore, value the body as though it were like everything underneath the sky; as if everything underneath the sky could depend on it. The body is like everything that is underneath the sky; as if all that are underneath the sky could be entrusted with it.

Chapter 14

To look but not to see is called disappearing, to listen but not hear is called rare, to struggle but not get is called faint. These three cannot be closely questioned, therefore, they mix and become one.

Its top is not bright, its bottom is not dark. Restraining and restraining, it cannot be named, again it returns to nothing, it is called the formless form, the image of nothing, it is called dim and indistinct. Welcoming it and you still cannot see its head, following it and you cannot see its back. Grasp the ancient Dao, so as to have it driven into the now. To be able to know the ancient beginnings is called the chronicles of Dao.

Chapter 15

The ancients who were good at being scholars were faint, mysterious, profound and open, they were so deep you could not know them.

Now, only because you could not know them, therefore, I am compelled to describe their appearance. Hesitating, like crossing a river in winter. Irresolute ah, like fearing neighbours on four sides. Dignified ah, like being a guest. Dissolving ah, like ice that will melt. Honest ah, like simplicity. Vast ah, like the valley. Mixed ah, like muddiness.

What is able to change muddy water, so that it is gradually still? What is able to turn quiet into old movement that gradually produces life? Protect this Dao and do not desire to fill it, now only because you do not fill it, therefore, you are able to hide it and not complete the use of it.

Chapter 16

Arrive at the utmost void, abide by genuine stillness. The ten thousand things work together, I just observe their return.

Now, things are multitudinous, each will return and enter its root. To return to the root is called stillness, which is called a return to life. A return to life is called the constant, to know the constant is called brightness.

To not know the constant is to absurdly do inauspicious things, to know the constant is to be tolerant, to be tolerant is to be fair, to be fair is to be kingly, to be kingly is to be like the sky, to be like the sky is to be like the Dao, to be like the Dao is to last a long time, and to the time he is without a body, there is no danger.

Chapter 17

A great ruler is one that the people below him only just know that they have him as a ruler, next is to love and praise him, next is to fear him and next is to insult him. To not have enough trust is to have no trust. Leisurely ah, those valuable words. To accomplish and succeed in affairs, the hundred surnames all say, "I am natural."

Chapter 18

When the great Dao is disregarded, there is benevolence and righteousness. When wisdom comes out there is great falsity. When the six blood relations are not in harmony, there is filial piety and parental affection. When the state and royal house are in darkness and a mess, then there are loyal ministers.

Chapter 19

Terminate the sages and abandon wisdom, the people will benefit a hundred times. Terminate benevolence and abandon righteousness, the people will return to filial piety and parental affection. Terminate skilfulness and abandon profit, then there will be no bandits and thieves. These three are not enough to be a doctrine, therefore, have an affiliation with seeing the plainness, embracing simplicity and lessening the self with few desires.

Chapter 20

Terminate study and there will be no worries, yes to an elder and yes to a younger person, how much difference is there? Good and evil, how different are they? What the people so fear, you too cannot, not fear.

A desolate wasteland ah, it does not end! All the people are prosperous, like enjoying themselves after the great ox sacrifice, like ascending the platform in spring. I alone am anchored ah, with no omens, like an infant with no

laughter. Exhausted ah, like having no place to return too. All the people each have excess, yet I alone am like I am left behind. I have the heart of a stupid person!

Confused ah. The layman is clear, I alone am muddled. The layman is spotless, I alone am depressed. Peaceful ah, it is like the ocean, a wind in high places ah, as if it never stops. All the people each have use, yet I alone am stupid and appear lowly. I alone am different from other people because I treasure feeding on the mother.

Chapter 21

The appearance of the quiescence of emptiness only comes from the Dao. If Dao is a thing, it is only indistinct and only dim. Dim ah, indistinct ah, in its middle it has an image, vague ah, indistinct ah, in its middle it has something. Obscure ah, dark ah, in its middle it has an essence, its essence is deep and real, in its middle it has trust. From ancient times up till now, its name does not go, so that we may examine the father of many things. How do I know the condition of the father of many! It is because of this.

Chapter 22

Bent so as to become whole, crooked so as to become straight, hollow so as to become full, harmed so as to become new, little so as to have, much so as to become confused. So, the sage holds on to the one and becomes a pattern for everything that is underneath the sky. Not self-seeing, therefore bright, not self-existing, therefore clear, not boastful of oneself and therefore to have skill, not self-important, therefore long-lasting.

Now, only because he does not contend, therefore, nothing underneath the sky is able to contend with him. What the ancients so-called bent, so as to become whole, how empty are these words!? Sincere and whole, yet also to return.

Chapter 23

Nature speaks a little, therefore, stormy winds do not last a morning and a downpour does not last the day. What causes this? The sky and the earth. The actions of the sky and the earth still cannot last long, much less those actions of people!

Therefore, in engaging with affairs and being with the Dao, one needs to be the same as the Dao. To be part of quiescence, one needs to be the same as quiescence. To be part of loss, one needs to be the same as loss.

To be the same as the Dao is to also have happiness with the Dao, to be the same as quiescence is to also have happiness with quiescence, to be the same as loss is to also to have happiness with loss. When there is not enough trust, then there is no trust.

Chapter 24

One who stands on tiptoes cannot stand, one who strides cannot walk, one who is self-seeing is not bright, one who is self-existing is not clear, one who is boastful of oneself has no skill, one who is self-important does not last long. In the Dao this is also called excessive food and superfluous appearances. Avoided by things, therefore, this has no dwelling with the Dao.

Chapter 25

There was something mixed becoming, it was before the sky and (produced the) earth, still ah, silent ah, standing alone, with no change, moving cyclically, yet without danger, it can be the mother of all that is underneath the sky. I do not know its name, the word I use to call it is Dao. If forced to name it, it is called great, great is called the passing of time, the passing of time is called far, far is called returning.

Therefore, there is the great Dao, great sky, great earth and the king who is also great. Within the realm there are four greats and the king's residence is one of them. Man patterns himself on the earth, the sky patterns itself on the Dao and the Dao patterns itself on nature.

Chapter 26

Heavy is root to the light, quiet is the monarch to the irritable. So, the sage travels until the end of the day but does not part from the baggage wagon. Although there are glorious places to see and places of banquets, he remains detached from them. How could the lord of ten thousand rides, himself, tread lightly on all that is underneath the sky. Light so as to lose the root, irritable so as to lose the monarch.

Chapter 27

Good travelling leaves no wheel track marks, good speech leaves no deliberate faults, good counting uses no counters or slips, good shutting is without a barrier or bolt, yet cannot be opened, a good knot uses no rope restraints, yet cannot be untied. So, the sage is constantly good at saving the people, therefore, no person is

abandoned.

Constant goodness rescues things, therefore, nothing is abandoned, this is called inheriting the brightness. Therefore, good people are the not good people's teacher, the not good people are the good people's capital. Do not value the teacher and do not love the capital, although this wisdom is greatly confusing, it is called the essential mystery.

Chapter 28

Know the male but abide by the female, this is to be the ravine of all that is underneath the sky. To be the ravine of all that is underneath the sky is to not part from the constant quiescence and again return to the infant.

Know the white but abide by the black, this is to be the pattern of all that is underneath the sky. To be the pattern of all that is underneath the sky is to be constantly quiescent with no mistakes and again to return to the utmost emptiness.

Know the honour but abide by its dishonour, this is to be the valley of all that is underneath the sky. To be the valley of all that is underneath the sky, is to therefore, be full in constant quiescence and again to return to simplicity. When simplicity scatters then there will be an implement, the sage uses the implement, so there will be an official, therefore, a great establishment does not cut.

Chapter 29

One who desires to take all that is underneath the sky and act up on it, I see they will never obtain it. Everything that is underneath the sky is like a spirit implement and cannot be acted upon. To act is to fail, to hold is to lose.

Therefore, things either move or follow, either breathe out through the nose or puff, are either just strong or they are actually winning, things are either flexed or they are destroyed. So, the sage gets rid of extremes, gets rid of extravagances and gets rid of grandeur.

Chapter 30

When the Dao assists the ruler of men, soldiers will not use force on all that is underneath the sky. These affairs are easy at coming back. The dwelling where the troops are, thistles and thorns will grow. After a great military campaign there must be a year of ill omens.

Good is to be resolute, that is all, do not dare to take with strength. Resolute but not self-important, resolute but not boastful, resolute but not arrogant, resolute because you have no other choice, resolute but without strength. When things are robust, then they will become old, this is called not following the Dao, not following the Dao is to have an early end.

Chapter 31

Now, quality weapons are inauspicious implements, things may fear them, therefore, those that have the Dao do not dwell with them. A man of noble character, his residence will value the left, one who uses soldiers will value the right.

Weapons are inauspicious implements, they are not the implements of a man with noble character, only when he has no alternative should he use them, harmony and indifference are the highest. Winning is not beautiful, if it is beautiful, then one is happy to kill people.

Now, being happy to kill people is to not be able to have wisdom with all that is underneath the sky. Auspicious affairs esteem the left and inauspicious affairs esteem the right. The assistant general resides on the left, the chief general resides on the right, that is to say, the chief general's place is at the mourning ritual. To kill lots of people, to mourn and weep with grief and to win the battle is to place oneself at the mourning ritual.

Chapter 32

The constant Dao has the nameless simplicity. Although small, nothing underneath the sky can subjugate it. If the feudal lords and kings are able to abide by it, then ten thousand things themselves will be a guest. The sky and the earth mutually connect to descend sweet dew, when the people are not ordered about, they themselves become equal.

In the beginning, names are made, once there are already names, one must now also know when to stop, knowing when to stop and there can be no danger. Taking the Dao as an example for all that is underneath the sky is like a river valley that flows into the rivers and ocean.

Chapter 33

Knowing a person is wisdom, knowing the self is brightness. Defeating other people is to have strength,

defeating the self is to be strong. To know contentedness is to be rich. To do with strength is to have aspirations. Do not lose yourself, so as to last a long time. To die, yet with no death is to have longevity.

Chapter 34

The great Dao is extensive ah, it can spread to the left and to the right. The ten thousand things depend on it, yet it produces with no decline, it accomplishes but has no name, it clothes and nourishes the ten thousand things but does not govern them.

Constantly with no desire it can be named small, the ten thousand things return to it, yet it does not govern them, it can be named the great. Because in the end it does not see itself as great, therefore, it can become great.

Chapter 35

Hold on to the great image and everything underneath the sky will go towards it. Going towards it, yet there is no harm, only great safety and peacefulness. Music and cakes, passing guests will stop. When the Dao exits, it is completely bland and it is tasteless, look at it and there is not enough to see it, listen to it and there is not enough to hear it, use it and there is not enough to finish it.

Chapter 36

What you desire to be inhaled must be firmly opened, to weaken desires they must be firmly strengthened, to abandon desires they must firmly rise up, to seize desires they must be firmly given. This is called the faint brightness. Soft and weak win over the hard and strong. Fish cannot leave the deep pool, a state's sharp implements cannot be shown to the people.

Chapter 37

The constant Dao is non-action, so nothing is not done. If feudal lords and kings are able to abide by it, then ten thousand things will themselves transform. If in transforming there is a desire to do, I will subdue it with the nameless simplicity. With the nameless simplicity, now there also will be no desire. With no desire there is stillness and everything underneath the sky will stabilise by themselves.

Chapter 38

Upper quiescence is not quiescence, so there is quiescence. Lower quiescence is to not lose quiescence, so there is no quiescence. Upper quiescence has no action, so nothing has action, lower quiescence acts, so it has action. Upper benevolence acts, so nothing has action, upper righteousness acts, so it has action. Upper rites have actions, so when there is no response, then it will roll up its sleeves and throw its arms in the air.

Therefore, when the Dao is lost, so then comes quiescence, when quiescence is lost, so then comes benevolence, when benevolence is lost, so then comes righteousness and when righteousness is lost, so then comes rites.

Now, in regard to rites, there is a fine line between loyalty, trustworthiness and the beginning of disorder. Foreknowledge is the Dao's illustriousness and the start of foolishness. So, now a great man dwells in thickness and does not reside in thinness, he dwells in honesty and does not reside in illustriousness. Therefore, he leaves that and gets this.

Chapter 39

In the past those that had the one were as follows: the sky had the one, so it was clear, the earth had the one, so it was peaceful, the spirit had the one, so it was innately intelligent, the valley had the one, so it was full, the ten thousand things had the one, so they could produce life, the feudal lords and kings had the one, so the ten thousand things underneath the sky were loyal.

Such results can occur: when the sky is not clear, fear it will crack, when the earth is not peaceful, fear it will lie waste, when the spirit is not innately intelligent, fear it will stop, when the valley is not full, fear it will be barren, when the ten thousand things are not producing life, fear they will be wiped out, when the feudal lords and kings do not value the high, fear everything will fall.

Therefore, value what is lowly as the root and esteem what is below as the foundation. So, the feudal lords and kings call themselves fatherless, widowed and unworthy, is this not to take what is lowly as one's root? Therefore, to have lots of praise is to have no praise. Do not desire for things to tinkle like jade or chime like stones.

Chapter 40

Returning is the movement of the Dao, weakness is what the Dao uses. The ten thousand things that are underneath the sky are born from having but having is born from emptiness.

Chapter 41

A high-level scholar hears about the Dao and diligently walks it, a middle-level scholar hears about the Dao and kind of cherishes but also kind of ignores it, a low-level scholar hears about the Dao and laughs. If he did not laugh, it does not deserve to be the Dao.

Therefore, some sayings are: the bright Dao is like it is concealed; approaching the Dao is like backing away; the level and flat Dao is like it is knotted; upper quiescence is like a valley; a great brightness is like a disgrace; extensive quiescence is like it is lacking; established quiescence is like it is stealthy; the unadorned and unaffected seem like they are changing; a big square has no corners; a big implement is late in completion; a big voice hardly has any sound; the big image has no form; the hidden Dao is nameless.

Now, it is only the Dao that is good at granting and accomplishing.

Chapter 42

The Dao produces one, one produces two, two produces three and three produces the ten thousand things. The ten thousand things carry yin on their back and hold yang in their arms, the mixing of energy is what makes the harmony.

What people so dislike; fatherless, widowed and unworthy, yet this is what the kings and dukes call themselves. Therefore, things are either decreased, so as to be increased or increased, so as to be decreased. What people so teach, I also teach, the tyrannical do not have a natural death, I will take this as the father of all teachings.

Chapter 43

When everything that is underneath the sky arrives at being soft, horses will gallop over the hardest underneath the sky, the intangible can enter into that which has no gap. So, I therefore know that non-action has benefit. Teaching without words, the benefit of non-action, hardly anything that is underneath the sky can catch it.

Chapter 44

Your name or body, which is dearer? Your body or your possessions, which is more important? To have or to lose, which is the disease? So therefore, deep love must come at a great cost and lots of hoarding must have ample losses. Know what is sufficient in order to have no disgrace, know when to stop in order to have no danger, only then one can long endure.

Chapter 45

Great accomplishment appears lacking, in its use it does no harm, great fullness appears empty, in its use it has no limit. Great straightness appears bent, great skill appears clumsy, great debating appears inarticulate. Irritability defeats the cold, stillness defeats heat, to be clear and still is the correct way for all that is underneath the sky.

Chapter 46

When everything that is underneath the sky has Dao, galloping horses go back to being used for their dung, when everything that is underneath the sky does not have the Dao, war horses give birth in the outskirts of the city. There is no greater crime than desire, there is no greater disaster than not knowing what is enough and there is no greater mistake than having desire. Therefore, know when enough is enough, this is to constantly have enough.

Chapter 47

Without going out the door, know everything that is underneath the sky, without peeping out the window you can see the sky's Dao. The further one goes, the less one knows. So, the sage does not do, yet he knows, does not see, yet he can name things, he does not do, yet he accomplishes.

Chapter 48

For study daily increase, for Dao daily decrease, decrease and decrease until arriving at non-action, non-action, so nothing is not done. In managing everything that is underneath the sky, make it the constant to not have any affairs, to have affairs is to be lacking in managing everything underneath the sky.

Chapter 49

The sage does not have a constant heart, he takes the heart of the hundred surnames to be his own heart. Good people, I am good to, not good people, I am also good to, this is the quiescence of goodness.

Trustful people, I trust, untrustworthy people, I also trust, this is the quiescence of trustfulness. The sage is underneath the sky, he breathes in, so as to mix his heart with everything that is underneath the sky. The hundred

surnames all pay attention to their ears and eyes, and because of this, they are all like the sage's children.

Chapter 50

To be born is to enter death. One third of people follow life, one third of people follow death and also one third of people with life, are moving to a place of death.

Now, why is this? Because to seek the life of life is too excessive. I have heard, to be good at conserving one's life is to travel by land and not chance upon female rhinoceroses or tigers and to enter the army and not wear armour.

For these people, female rhinoceroses do not have a place to stick their horns, tigers do not have a place to use their claws and soldiers do not have a place to stab their swords.

Now, why is this? Because they have no place of death.

Chapter 51

The Dao produces, quiescence raises, things have form and circumstances complete. So, none of the ten thousand things do not respect the Dao and value quiescence.

The respect of Dao and the value of quiescence. Now, none of these things are ever commanded to do and are instead constantly natural.

Therefore, the Dao produces life, quiescence raises, grows, nurtures, shelters, toughens, nourishes and protects. Produce, yet not to have, to act, yet not depend on, to grow, yet not to slaughter. This is called profound quiescence.

Chapter 52

Everything that is underneath the sky has a beginning and this beginning is the mother of everything that is underneath the sky. Having known the mother is to know the child, having known the child is to again abide by its mother, to abide by the mother till the end and the body has no danger.

Block the holes and close the doors, so in the end the body is not exhausted. Opening the holes, assisting with affairs and in the end the body cannot be rescued. Seeing the small is called bright, abiding by the soft is called strong. Use the light and again return to the bright, do not bequeath your body to calamities, this is called practising the constant.

Chapter 53

If I were to make use of a little bit of knowledge that I have, it would be to walk with the great Dao and only fear going astray. The great Dao is very smooth, yet people are very fond of other paths.

The royal court is completely wiped out, the fields are completely overgrown with weeds, the granaries are completely empty, wearing embroidered colours, carrying sharp swords, sated with food and drink, to have a surplus of wealth and possessions, this is called the boasting of a thief. This is not the Dao!

Chapter 54

A good establishment cannot be uprooted, a good embrace cannot slip away, sons and grandsons give sacrificial offerings without stopping. Cultivating the body and quiescence is therefore real, cultivate at home and quiescence therefore has surplus, cultivate in the village and quiescence therefore has growth, cultivate in the state and quiescence is therefore plentiful, cultivate in everything underneath the sky and quiescence is therefore everywhere.

Therefore, the body observes the body, the home observes the home, the village observes the village, the state observes the state and everything that is underneath the sky observes everything that is underneath the sky. How do I know that everything underneath the sky is so? It is because of this.

Chapter 55

Hold onto the fullness of quiescence as it is comparable to a newborn baby. Wasps, scorpions and snakes will not sting or bite them, fierce animals will not seize them and birds of prey will not strike them. Their bones are weak, their tendons are soft but their grasp is firm.

Not knowing the joining of male and female but still having an intact penis that works, his sexual essence is at its peak. Crying the whole day, yet he does not get a hoarse voice, the peak of harmony. To know this harmony is called the constant. To know the constant is called bright, to increase life is called inauspicious, when the heart uses energy, this is called strength. When things are robust, they are old, this is not called the Dao, with no Dao

there is an early end.

Chapter 56

Those that know do not speak, those that speak do not know. Block the holes, close the doors, blunt the sharp, untie the tangled, harmonise the bright, be the same as dust, this is called to be the same as the profound.

Therefore, with this person, one cannot have either closeness, one cannot have either distance, one cannot have either benefit, one cannot have either harm, one cannot have either value and one cannot have either humiliation. Therefore, in everything that is underneath the sky this person is valued.

Chapter 57

Be upright in managing the state, use the army as something strange to do and with non-interference take everything that is underneath the sky.

How do I know this is so? It is because of this: when everything that is underneath the sky has lots of taboos, the poorer the people, when the people have lots of sharp implements, the state and royal house are increasingly in darkness, when the people are very crafty, strange things increasingly arise, when the command of laws are increasingly clever, the more bandits and thieves there will be.

Therefore, the sage says: "I have non-action, so the people themselves transform, I am very still, so the people themselves are upright, I do not have any business, so the people themselves are natural, I have no desire, so the people are themselves simple."

Chapter 58

When the government is depressed, its people are pure and honest, when the government is inquiring about everything, its people are lacking.

Disaster! What happiness relies on. Happiness! What disasters conceal. Who knows the limit. When there is no uprightness, uprightness once again is strange and the good once again are evil. The confusion of the people, these days are undoubtedly long. So, the sage is square but not cutting, angular but does not injure, straight but not unrestrained, bright but not dazzling.

Chapter 59

In governing the people and dealing with the sky, there is nothing like being thrifty.

Now, only thrifty is called early preparation, early preparation is called heavily accumulated quiescence. To have heavily accumulated quiescence and there is nothing a person cannot overcome. Having nothing that cannot be overcome and there is no known limit to this person.

Having no known limit and this person can have the state. Having the mother of the state and one can long endure. So, this is called deep roots and a firm base, which is the Dao's way to live long and to see the world a long time.

Chapter 60

Governing a large state is like cooking a small fish, use the Dao to administrate everything that is underneath the sky, then ghosts do not have a spirit. It is not that these ghosts do not really have no spirit, it is that their spirit cannot harm people.

It is not that these spirits do not harm people, it is that the sage also does not harm people. Now, because these two do not mutually harm the people, therefore, quiescence converges and makes a return.

Chapter 61

A large state is downstream where all the rivers under the sky converge and is the female of everything that is underneath the sky. A female constantly can with stillness defeat the male, this is because stillness is below.

Therefore, a large state can lie below a small state, thereby taking the small state, a small state can lie below a large state, thereby taking the large state. Therefore, either by low lying a state can take over or by low lying a state then takes. A large state merely desires to unite and raise the people, a small state merely desires to enter into the affairs of people.

Now, the two each get what they so desire, the big state appropriately is below.

Chapter 62

The Dao is the abstruse mystery of ten thousand things, it is the good person's treasure and is what preserves the not good person. Beautiful words can be traded, respectful conduct can increase a person.

People that are not good, why have them abandoned? Therefore, when establishing the son of the sky and putting in place the three ministers, although a large flat round ornament of jade with a hole at the centre is given before the four chariot horses, it is not like sitting down and moving towards the Dao.

Why did the ancients so value this Dao? One does not say they did it to seek gain, they did it to be exempt of fault. Therefore, they are valued by all that are underneath the sky.

Chapter 63

Actions have no actions, affairs have no affairs, tastes have no tastes. Big as small, a lot as a little. Repay resentment with quiescence. Plan the difficult while it is easy, do big things while they are small. Underneath the sky difficult affairs must be done when they are easy, underneath the sky great affairs must be done when they are small. So, in the end the sage never does anything great, therefore, the sage is able to accomplish greatness.

Now, light promises must have little trust, what is especially easy must be especially difficult. So, the sage takes things like they are difficult, therefore in the end, nothing is difficult!

Chapter 64

What is quiet is easy to maintain, what has not yet come out is easy to plan, what is fragile easily falls apart, what is faint is easily scattered. Act when there is nothing to have, manage when things are not yet a mess.

A tree that can fill the embrace of a man's arms is born from a tiny shoot, a platform of nine levels high starts from piling up earth, a journey of a thousand miles begins beneath one's feet. To act is to fail, to hold is to lose. So, the sage uses non-action, therefore, nothing fails, the sage does not hold on, therefore, nothing loses.

The people in dealing with affairs constantly have many accomplishments, yet they still lose. Be cautious at the end like it was the start and then there will be no loss in affairs. So, the sage desires to have no desire, he does not value those difficult to get goods, he learns not to learn, he returns the multitude of people to what they were like before, he assists the ten thousand things to be natural and dares not act.

Chapter 65

The ancients who were good at practising the Dao did not want to brighten the people but would instead keep them foolish. The people are difficult to manage when they have lots of wisdom.

Therefore, to use wisdom to govern a state is to rob the state, using no wisdom to govern the state is to bring happiness to the state. Therefore, knowing a state through knowledge is to be the state's thief, not knowing a state through knowledge is to have a quiescent state.

To know these two is to also know the postponed pattern. Constantly knowing the postponed pattern is called profound quiescence. Profound quiescence is deep and distant! It appears to run counter to things but afterwards it then arrives at great order.

Chapter 66

Rivers and oceans are able to be the kings of a hundred valleys because they are good at being below them. Therefore, they are able to be the kings of a hundred valleys.

So, if one desires to be above the people, your words must be below them, if one desires to be before the people, your body must be behind them. So, the sage's place is above, yet the people are not weighed down by him, his place is in front, yet the people are not harmed.

So, everything that is underneath the sky is happily pushing him forward, yet without tiring. This is because the sage does not contend, therefore, in everything that is underneath the sky, nothing can contend with him.

Chapter 67

Everything that is underneath the sky calls my Dao great but it seems like it is not.

Now, only because it is great, therefore, it seems like it is not worthy. If it was like being worthy, it would have long ago become minute.

Now, I have three treasures that I hold and protect: first is called parental affection, second is called frugality and the third is called daring not to be at the front of everything that is underneath the sky. Parental affection, therefore able to be brave and frugal, therefore able to be expansive and not daring to be at the front of everything that is underneath the sky, therefore able to completely grow into a vessel.

Now, to abandon parental affection but to be daring, to abandon frugality but to be expansive, to abandon being behind, so as to be in front is death.

Now, because of parental affection, so in war there is victory, so in military defence there is firmness. When the sky wants to save, it guards with parental affection.

Chapter 68

A good soldier does not show his martial skill, good fighting is done with no anger, being good at defeating an enemy is with no participation and being good at using people is to be below them. This is called the quiescence of non-contention, it is also called using the strength of people and it is also called the utmost of joining the sky of old.

Chapter 69

In using soldiers, there are the following sayings: "I dare not be the host, only the guest; I dare not advance an inch, only retreat a foot." This is called moving without moving, to roll up one's sleeves without showing one's arms, to attack without an enemy and to hold without a weapon.

There is no greater calamity than to make light of your enemy, making light of your enemy and an opportunity is lost, and so is my treasure. Therefore, fighting armies that are mutually together in combat, it is the grieving one which will defeat the other!

Chapter 70

My words are very easy to know and very easy to walk. But no one underneath the sky is able to know them and no one can walk them. Words have their ancestor, affairs have their monarch.

Now, only because they do not know, so they do not know me. Those who know me are few, thus I am valuable. So, the sage wears coarse clothes and carries jade in his bosom.

Chapter 71

Knowing that you do not know is superior, not knowing you do not know is a sickness.

Now, only by being sick of sickness, so there will be no sickness. The sage is not sick because he is sick of sickness, so therefore, he is not sick.

Chapter 72

When the people do not fear power, then great power arrives. Do not be familiar with people in their dwellings and do not grow sick of them in their living.

Now, only because there is no dislike, so there is no rejection. So, the sage knows himself but does not see himself, he loves himself but does not value himself. Therefore, he leaves that and gets this.

Chapter 73

Courageous at daring, thus death, courageous at not daring, thus life. These two, either have benefit or harm. What the sky finds evil, who knows why? So, the sage also has difficulties in understanding why.

The sky's Dao does not contend and therefore is good at defeating, it does not speak, yet it is good at responding, it does not summon, yet it comes itself, it is relaxed, yet good at planning. The net of the sky is vast, it scatters but does not neglect.

Chapter 74

The people do not fear death, so how are you going to fear them with death. If you make the people constantly fear death, yet one does strange things, I will grab them and kill them, then who will dare to be strange. To constantly have an executioner is to have killing.

Now, to replace the executioner's killing is called replacing him with the master craftsman's chop.

Now, to replace the master craftsman's chop, only a few will have their hands not damaged.

Chapter 75

The people are hungry because their superiors take too many taxes, so they are hungry. People are hard to manage because their superiors have action, so they are difficult to manage.

When people take death lightly, this is because they are richly seeking life, so the people take death lightly.

Now, only one who has nothing to do in life is worthy at valuing life.

Chapter 76

At birth humans are soft and weak, at death they are hard and strong. At birth the ten thousand things, the plants and trees are soft and full, at death they are dry and withered. Therefore, the hard and strong follow death, the soft and weak follow life.

So, a strong army will not win and strong wood will break. The strong and great have their place below, while the soft and weak have their place above.

Chapter 77

The sky's Dao, is it not like drawing a bowstring? Up is pressed down, down is lifted up, to have a surplus is to be reduced, to have deficiency is to be supplemented. The sky's Dao is to reduce what has surplus and to supplement that which is deficient. The Dao of man is not so, it reduces what is deficient and offers to that which has surplus.

Those who are able to have surplus and give offerings to everything that is underneath the sky, only they have the Dao. So, the sage acts, yet does not depend on, accomplishes, yet does not dwell and does not desire to show his worth.

Chapter 78

In all that is underneath the sky nothing is softer and weaker than water, yet in attacking the hard and strong, nothing can defeat it, this is because its emptiness is changeable. The weak defeats the strong, the soft defeats the hard, in everything that is underneath the sky, no one does not know this but no one is able to do it.

So, the sage says: "to receive the filth of the state is called the governing altar for the gods of earth and grain. To receive the bad luck of the state is the king of everything that is underneath the sky." Upright words seem to be in reverse.

Chapter 79

In harmonising great resentment there must have some surplus resentment left over, how can this be good? So, the sage holds the left contract, yet does not demand from people.

One who has quiescence is in charge of the contract, those without quiescence are in charge of taxes. The sky's Dao has no relatives and is constantly with good people.

Chapter 80

A small state with few people makes ten multiples of a hundred implements, yet does not use them. Make the people feel heavy about death and do not let them move far away. Although they have boats and carts, there is no place to ride them. Although they have armour and weapons there is no place to display them.

Make the people again tie knots and use them. Sweet foods, beautiful clothes, quiet dwellings and happy customs. Neighboring states look at each other, the sounds of chickens and dogs also heard by each other, the people reach an old age and die without mutually going back and forth.

Chapter 81

Trustworthy words are not beautiful, beautiful words are not trustworthy. Good does not distinguish, distinguishing is not good. Knowing is not extensive, extensiveness is not knowing.

The sage does not accumulate. He acts for the people, so the more he will have. He gives to the people, so the even more abundant he will be. The sky's Dao benefits all and does not harm any. The Dao of the sage acts, yet does not contend.

3. Chinese Texts, Translation Notes and Analysis

Chapter 1 第一章

Line 1

道可²道·非常³道·名可名·非常名。

² Here Lǎozǐ uses the character kě 可 (can), without any further explanation. Some translations add the word "spoken." "The Dào that can be spoken." It is possible that Lǎozǐ was referring to: spoken; discussed; read about; or even thought about. When we look at chapter 35, line 4, we can see the Dào as something that language or thought cannot really grasp. In chapter 25, lines 2, 3, and 4, Lǎozǐ describes the Dào as something that is unknowable, and only because he is somewhat compelled or forced to give it some form of a name or a description, he calls it Dào.

[The] Dào [that] can [be the] Dào [is] not [the] constant Dào. [The] name [that] can [be the] name [is] not [the] constant name.

MWD

道可道也，非恆道也⁵，名可名也，非恆名也。

Line 2

無名天地⁶之⁷始，有名萬物之母。

Nameless, the start [of the] sky [and the] earth. [To] have [a] name, the mother [of] ten thousand things⁸.

MWD

無名萬物之始也，有名萬物之母也。

Nameless, the start [of] ten thousand things. [To] have [a] name, the mother [of] ten thousand things.

Line 3

故，常無欲，以⁹觀其¹⁰妙，常有欲，以觀其微¹¹。

Therefore, constantly [with] no desire, so [as to] observe its mysteries. Constantly [to] have desire, so [as to] observe its border (manifestations).

MWD

故，恆無欲也，以觀其妙¹²，恆有欲也，以觀其所噉。

Line 4

此兩者，同出，而異名，同謂之玄¹³。玄之又¹⁴玄，眾妙之門。

³ The cháng 常 character is used throughout the *Dàodéjīng* many times. In the Mǎwángduī version, cháng is substituted for héng 恆, except for in chapter 16, lines 2 and 3; chapter 52, line 5, and chapter 55, line 5. The only common denominator between these two characters is that they both can mean “constant.” This idea of constant seems to be mutually exchangeable with the words “normal” or “constantly.” It seems that Lǎozǐ sees nature’s way as being the norm, therefore, cháng could be translated as “natural,” “naturally,” “nature’s way” or “naturalness.” I originally translated it in this way but took these translations out as a direct translation would still require “constant,” or “constantly.” In chapter 16, line 2, Lǎozǐ explicitly explains what cháng means: [a] return [to] life [is] called [the] constant, [to] know [the] constant [is] called brightness. One of the most useful chapters for understanding cháng is chapter 55, line 5: crying [the] whole day, yet [they do] not [get a] hoarse voice, [the] most (peak) harmony. [To] know [this] harmony [is] called, [the] constant. This can be understood as something akin to nature’s harmony.

⁴ In modern Chinese, fēicháng 非常 means “extremely.”

⁵ Characters such as yě 也, hū 乎, yī 矣, zhě 者, fú 夫, zāi 哉 can all have varying meanings depending on how they are used. They were most likely originally used as a type of pause to help the reader have some form of sentence structure, so they know where they are in the sentence. Therefore, I generally add some form of pause by using a comma or full stop in the Chinese text behind these characters.

⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, tiāndì 天地 (sky and earth) is wànwù 萬物 (ten thousand things).

⁷ Where the word zhī 之 is, I generally add “the.” If the zhī is the second-to-last word of the sentence, I take that part and put it at the beginning of the sentence. The character de 的 is the modern equivalent of zhī 之.

⁸ Ten thousand things mean “everything.”

⁹ The character yǐ 以 is one of the most common grammar characters used in the *Dàodéjīng* and can have a vast array of meanings depending on the sentence. In regard to translating yǐ, I commonly use “so,” “can,” “is” or “because” wherever possible. Otherwise, I insert the most reasonable English grammar word.

¹⁰ The character qí 其 is normally translated as “it/s,” “the,” “this” or “their.”

¹¹ In the MWD versions A and B, jiào 徼 (boundary or border) is jiào 噉 (it is most likely an alternate form of jiào 徼).

¹² In the MWD version A, miào 妙 (mystery) is miǎo 眇 (minuscule).

¹³ The character xuán 玄 is used throughout the *Dàodéjīng* and could be translated in many ways. It is commonly translated as “dark.” It seems that Lǎozǐ most likely did not mean dark as we use it in English. If we understand it from Lǎozǐ’s perspective, it appears to mean something indescribable, like the Dào. As Lǎozǐ commonly uses this character in a positive manner, I use the word “profound,” as in English, something profound tends to be indescribable but is also used in a positive way. MWD omits, zhīxuán 之玄.

¹⁴ The grammar word yòu 又 has been translated as “even more,” as the character means a repetition or continuation in

These two [come] out [the] same, yet [are] named differently, both [are] called the profound. Profound [and] even more profound, the gate [to] all mysteries.

MWD

#兩者，同出#異名，同_胃#玄，玄之又¹⁵玄，眾妙之門。

Chapter 2 第二章

Line 1

天下¹⁶皆知美之為美，斯¹⁷惡已¹⁸，皆知善之為善，斯不善已。

[When everything that is] underneath [the] sky all know beauty to be beautiful, thus [there is] already ugliness.

[When] all know good to be good, thus [there is] already not good.

MWD

天下皆知¹⁹美之為美，#惡²⁰已，²¹皆知善###，斯不善矣。

[When everything that is] underneath [the] sky, all know beauty to be beautiful, [there is] already ugliness.

[When] all know good, thus [there is] not good.

Line 2

故，有無相生，難易相成，長短相形²²，高下相傾²³，音聲相和，前後相隨²⁴ ²⁵。

Therefore, [to] have [and] not [have] mutually create, difficult [and] easy mutually become, long [and] short mutually shape, high [and] low mutually lean, voice [and] sound mutually harmonise, front [and] back mutually follow.²⁶

MWD

#有_无之相生也²⁷，難易之相成，長短之相_刑也，高下相_盈也，音聲²⁸之相和也，先後之相_隋恆也。

Line 3

是以，²⁹聖人處³⁰無³¹為之事，行不言之教。

So, [the] sage dwells [in] the affairs [of] non-action [and] teaches [by] doing [and] not speaking.

MWD

是以，聲³²人_居无為之事³³，行不言之教。

action.

¹⁵ In the MWD version A, yòu 又 is yǒu 有 (have).

¹⁶ The characters tiānxià 天下 (under/neath the sky) could also be translated as “the world,” it has purposely been kept as a direct translation.

¹⁷ The character sī 斯 is translated as “thus.”

¹⁸ The character yǐ 已 is translated as “already.”

¹⁹ In the Guōdiàn in this chapter zhī 知 (knowledge) is zhì 智 (wisdom).

²⁰ In the MWD version B and the Guōdiàn, è 惡 (ugly) is yà 亞 (inferior).

²¹ In the Guōdiàn, this line reads: 皆智善此丌不善已。

²² In the MWD versions A and B, xíng 形 (shape) is xíng 刑 (punishment) and in the Guōdiàn it is xíng 型 (type).

²³ In the MWD versions A and B, qīng 傾 (lean) is yíng 盈 (fill).

²⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, suí 隨 (follow) is suí 隋 and in the Guōdiàn it is huī or duò 墮 (sink or destroy).

²⁵ At the end of this sentence in MWD versions A and B, héngyě 恆也 is added, which could translate as [this is the] constant.

²⁶ In line 2, an early expression of the philosophy of yin and yang—and the concept of duality it embodies—can be observed.

²⁷ In the Guōdiàn, this line reads: 又亡之相生也。

²⁸ The Guōdiàn mistakenly uses shèng 聖 (sage).

²⁹ The characters shìyǐ 是以 is always translated as “so” in this paper.

³⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, chǔ 處 (reside or dwell) is jū 居 (residence).

³¹ In the MWD wú 無 is wú 无 and in the Guōdiàn is sometimes wáng 亡. These three characters (無, 无, 亡) have historically been used to represent the word “no” among other meanings.

Line 4

萬物作焉³⁴，而³⁵不辭³⁶，生，而不有³⁷，為，而不³⁸恃，功成，而弗³⁹居。

[The] ten thousand things do, yet [there is] no decline, [to] produce (or give birth), yet not [to] have (own), [to] act, yet not [to] depend on, [to] accomplish, yet not [to] reside [in accomplishment].

MWD

萬物作⁴⁰，而弗始，####，為，而弗恃⁴¹也，成功，而弗居也。

Line 5

夫⁴²唯，弗居，是以，不去。

Now, only [because there is] no residing [in accomplishment], so [there is] no loss.

MWD

夫唯，弗居，是以，弗去。

Chapter 3 第三章**Line 1**

不尚⁴³賢，使民不爭。

[Do] not esteem [the] worthy, so [the] people [will] not contend [with each other].

MWD

不上賢，使民不爭。

Line 2

不貴難得⁴⁴之貨，使民不為盜。

[Do] not value hard to get goods, so [the] people [will] not become robbers.

MWD

不貴難得之貨，使民不為盜。

³² MWD version A uses the character shēng 聲, which means “sound.” MWD version B does not have a character for this. Examples like this clearly show that a scribe is writing down an orally memorised or orally spoken version and is simply writing a sound as opposed to a character, hence the mistake.

³³ In the Guōdiàn, this line reads: 是以，聖人居亡為之事。

³⁴ The character yān 焉 is used throughout the *Dàodéjīng*, it is a synonym of zāi 哉 and hū 乎. It is also a final modal particle, used to show a particular state or express affirmation, doubt or exclamation. I have omitted any form of translation for it. Zāi can sometimes be translated with an exclamation mark. The character hū 乎 can have various meanings but is either translated with an exclamation or question mark. The character xī 兮 could also be translated with an exclamation but in some places, I have used the colloquial English word “ah,” which is based on the modern usage of the Mandarin word, a 啊. The classical version of “ah” is jū 且.

³⁵ The character ér 而 is a grammar character normally translated as “yet,” but where that does not work in a sentence, “but” or “and” is used.

³⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, cí 辭 (decline) is shǐ 始 (start).

³⁷ These four characters: 生，而不有 are not in the MWD version.

³⁸ In many cases within the MWD, bù 不 (no) is fú 弗 (not).

³⁹ Throughout the *Dàodéjīng* there are many words used to describe a negative, such as “no,” or “not.” Some examples include, fú 弗, bù 不, wú 無, mò 莫 and wù 勿.

⁴⁰ In the MWD version B, zuò 作 (to do) is xī 昔 (former times, in the past).

⁴¹ In the MWD version A, shì 恃 (depend on) is zhì 志 (will or aspiration).

⁴² The character fú 夫 is one of the most common grammar words used in the *Dàodéjīng*. It can be used as a generic personal pronoun, a generic demonstrative pronoun, and a sentence-initial particle which introduces a topic. I have generally translated it as “now.” Fúwéi 夫唯 is the most common usage of fú in the *Dàodéjīng* and is translated as “now, only ...”

⁴³ In the MWD versions A and B, shàng 尚 (esteem) is shàng 上 (up).

⁴⁴ The character dé 得 can mean “to obtain,” “to gain” or “to acquire.”

Line 3

不見可欲，使民心不亂。

[Do] not show [things that] can [be] desirous, so [the] people's hearts [are] not [in a] mess.

MWD

不見可欲，使民#不亂。

Line 4

是以，聖人之治，虛其心⁴⁵，實其腹，弱其志，強其骨。

So, [the] sage manages [by] emptying the heart, filling the abdomen, weakening the will [and] strengthening the bones.

MWD

是以，聖⁴⁶人之治也，#元心，實元腹，弱元志，強元骨。

Line 5

常使民無知無欲，使夫，智者，不敢為也⁴⁷。

Constantly make [the] people not know [and have] no desire, make [those] now [who have] wisdom dare not act.

MWD

恆使民无知无欲也，使夫，##，知不敢##。

Line 6

為無為則⁴⁸無不治。

Act [through] non-action, thus nothing [is] not managed.

MWD

弗為，而已，則無不治。

No action, that is all, thus nothing [is] not managed.

Chapter 4 第四章**Line 1**

道沖⁴⁹，而用之，或⁵⁰不盈。

[The] Dào is [like an] empty utensil, yet [in] use [it is] not filled.

MWD

道沖，而用之，有弗盈也。

[The] Dào is [like an] empty utensil, [it] has not [been] filled.

⁴⁵ In the MWD version A, these three words are not there. In the MWD version B, qí 其 (his, her, it/s, their) is qí 元 (this is an archaic word and means “his,” “her,” “it/s,” or “their”). In the MWD versions, this character difference is very common. I will continue to underline it but will not mention it anymore in the comments after this chapter. It is unclear if qí is referring to the sage or others, therefore, I have chosen “the” as the translation, as it is more generic.

⁴⁶ In the MWD version A, shèng 聖 (sage) is shēng 聲 (sound).

⁴⁷ In ancient Chinese, when there is one character followed by a zhě 者, which is then followed by a few words and then a yě 也, it is the first word before the zhě, which is being defined. In line 5, fú 夫 is translated as “now.” The sentence infers that it is nearly a rule in the way that those who have wisdom will dare not act.

⁴⁸ The character zé 則 in Chinese is very important and can be difficult to translate into English. It is used throughout the *Dàodéjīng* as a conjunction to indicate cause and effect. It could therefore be translated as “thus” but this word seems too weak, as the cause and effect that zé refers to is something that is more concrete, like a law. As I have been unable to find one word in English that seems to fit, I use “thus,” “because,” or “so as to become.”

⁴⁹ Chōng 沖 means to “infuse.” This word has connotations with zhōng 盅, which is a “small handleless cup.” The assumption in the context of the sentence is that this character chōng is referring to emptiness.

⁵⁰ In this case, huò 或 has no specific meaning and is used as a conjunction.

Line 2

淵兮⁵¹，似⁵²萬物之宗。

[Like an] abyss ah, [it is] like the ancestor [of the] ten thousand things.

MWD

淵⁵³呵，始萬物之宗。

Line 3

挫⁵⁴其銳，解其紛，和其光，同其塵。

[It] subdues the sharp, unties the entangled, harmonises the bright [and is the] same [as] the dust.

MWD

銼其銳⁵⁵，解其紛⁵⁶，和其光，同其塵。

Line 4

湛兮，似或⁵⁷存。

Deep ah, [it is] like [it] perhaps exists.

MWD

湛呵，怡或存。

Line 5

吾不知誰之子，象帝之先。

I [do] not know whose child [it is], [its] form precedes God.

MWD

吾不知元誰之子也，象帝之先。

Chapter 5 第五章**Line 1**

天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗，聖人不仁，以百姓為芻狗。

[The] sky [and the] earth [are] not benevolent, so [they treat the] ten thousand things to be (like) straw dogs, [the] sage [is] not benevolent, so [he treats a] hundred surnames⁵⁸ to be [as] straw dogs.⁵⁹

MWD

天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗，聖⁶⁰人不仁，以百姓⁶¹為芻狗。

⁵¹ In the MWD, xī 兮 is always hē 呵.

⁵² In MWD version A, sì 似 (like or similar) is shǐ 始 (start) and in version B, it is yí 怡, and is most likely pronounced yí and means “foolish” or “static.” Maybe something is static just before it starts. This same change is made in line 4.

⁵³ In the MWD version A, yuān 淵 (deep pool, profound, deep) is xiāo 瀟 (deep and clear water).

⁵⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, cuò 挫 (subdue) is cuò 銼 (a file).

⁵⁵ In the MWD version B, ruì 銳 (sharp) is duì 兌 (exchange).

⁵⁶ In the MWD version B, fēn 紛 (entangled) is fēn 芬 (fragrance).

⁵⁷ In modern Chinese, the character huò 或 is a conjunction and means “or” but in this case, it can mean “perhaps”.

⁵⁸ In Chinese, bǎixìng 百姓 directly means a hundred surnames, family or clan names but indirectly means “the common people.”

⁵⁹ This chapter introduces the concept of 'straw dogs' as a core idea in the *Dàodéjīng*, highlighting the importance of living naturally and without interference. It suggests that non-interference with nature may appear harsh, yet the sage accepts and follows this principle with understanding.

⁶⁰ See n.46.

⁶¹ In the MWD version A, xìng 姓 (family name) is xǐng 省 (pay a visit to one's parent, inspect or examine).

Line 2

天地之間，其猶橐籥乎，虛，而不屈⁶² ⁶³，動，而愈⁶⁴出。

Between [the] sky [and the] earth, it [is] like [a] bellows. Empty, yet [it is] not exhausted, moving, yet more [goes] out.

MWD

天地之間，元猶⁶⁵橐籥乎，虛，而不屈，動，而愈出。

Line 3

多言⁶⁶ ⁶⁷數窮，不如守中。

Lots [of] talk [is to be] quickly poor, [it is] not like abiding [by the] centre.

MWD

多聞數窮，不若守於中。

Chapter 6 第六章**Line 1**

谷⁶⁸神不死，是謂⁶⁹玄牝⁷⁰。

[The] valley spirit [does] not die, [it] is called [the] profound female.

MWD

浴神不死，是胃玄牝。

Line 2

玄牝之門，是謂天地根⁷¹。

The gate [of the] profound female is called [the] root [of the] sky [and the] earth.

MWD

#牝之門，是胃天地之根。

Line 3

綿⁷²綿若存，用之不勤⁷³。

Continuously [it] seems [to] exist, [in] use [though, it is] not diligent (consumed).

⁶² In the MWD versions A and B, qū 屈 (to exhaust) is gǔ 澁 (to exhaust).

⁶³ The Guōdiàn uses the exact same characters as these four.

⁶⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, yù 愈 (more) is yú 俞 (consent or approve).

⁶⁵ In the MWD version B, yóu 猶 (just as or like) is yóu 猷 (plan or scheme).

⁶⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, yán 言 (talk) is wén 聞 (hear).

⁶⁷ Yán 言 can mean talk or speak.

⁶⁸ In this case, gǔ 谷 is not the simplified version of gǔ 穀. The character gǔ is an ancient character from shàng oracle bone script itself. In the MWD versions A and B, gǔ 谷 (valley) is yù 浴 (bath, wash or bathe). It is most likely an alternate form of gǔ).

⁶⁹ Both MWD versions A and B use wèi 胃 (stomach and is an alternative form of wèi) instead of wèi 謂.

⁷⁰ The character pīn 牝 is a type of generic female adjective added to words like chicken and horse, in the way that when added, these words become hen and mare.

⁷¹ As the Dào produced everything, Lǎozǐ uses feminine similes such as the valley spirit, the profound female and the mother to represent it; water runs to the bottom of the valley and new life comes forth. For example, chapter 20, line 8: I alone [am] different [from other] people, because [I] treasure feeding [on the] mother. Chapter 10, line 5: [in] opening [and] closing [the] sky's gate, can [you] be [the] female? Chapter 28, line 1: know the male [but] abide [by] the female. Chapter 61, line 2: [a] females constantly can [with] stillness defeat [the] male.

⁷² In the MWD versions A and B, mián 綿 (continuous) is xiàn 縣 (district or prefecture).

⁷³ In the MWD versions A and B, qín 勤 (hardworking) is jīn 堊 (barely or merely. It can also mean clay).

MWD

縣縣呵，元若存，用之不。⁷⁴

Chapter 7 第七章**Line 1**

天長地久。天地所以⁷⁴能長且久者，以其不自生，故，能長生。

[The] sky [lives] long, [the] earth [is] old. [The] sky [and] earth [are] so able [to live] long and [be] old because they [do] not live [for] themselves, therefore, [they are] able [to] live long.

MWD

天長地久。天地之所以能長且久者，以其不自生也，故，能長生。

Line 2

是以，聖人後⁷⁵其⁷⁶身，而身先，外其身，而身存。非以其無私邪^{77 78}。故，能成其私。

So, [the] sage [puts] his body behind, yet [his] body [is in] front, [he puts] his body [on the] outside, yet [his] body lives. [Is this] not because he [is] not [for the] self? Therefore, [he] can complete himself.

MWD

是以，聖人退元身，而身先，外其身，而身先⁷⁹，外其身，而身存，不以其無私與，故，能成其私。

So, [the] sage [puts] his body behind, yet [his] body [is in] front, [he puts] his body [on the] outside, yet [his] body [is in the] front, [he puts] his body [on the] outside, yet [his] body lives. [Is this] not because he [is] not [for the] self? Therefore, [he] can complete himself.

Chapter 8 第八章**Line 1**

上善若⁸⁰水，水善利萬物，而不爭。

Superior goodness [is] like water, water [is] good [at] benefiting [the] ten thousand things because [it does] not contend.

MWD

上善如水，水善利萬物，而有爭⁸¹。

Line 2

處眾人之所惡，故，幾於⁸²道。

All [its] dwellings, people [find] ugly, therefore, [it is] almost at [the] Dao.

⁷⁴ The characters suǒyǐ 所以 are used to introduce a clause of result, which is preceded by a clause of reason. Potential translations could be “therefore,” “because” or “as a result of.” I prefer to use “so” because in this paper gù 故 is always translated as “therefore.”

⁷⁵ In the MWD version A, hòu 後 (back) is tuì 退 (to move back). In the MWD version B, it is ruì 芮 (tiny, small, the edge of a body of water).

⁷⁶ The character qí 其 can also be used as “his” or “her.”

⁷⁷ The character yé 邪, which is normally pronounced xié, is a grammar word that classically denotes a question.

⁷⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, yé 邪 is yú 與 (this word can mean “carriage” but in this case it is used as a grammar word, it seems to be used in the same way as yé).

⁷⁹ In the MWD version B, these six characters are added.

⁸⁰ In the MWD version A, ruò 若 (as if, like) is zhì 治 (rule, manage, govern), and in the MWD version B, it is rú 如 (as if, like).

⁸¹ In the MWD version A, zhēng 爭 (contend) is jìng 靜 (still), in version B it is the same as the Wáng Bì. This is the same in line 4.

⁸² The character yú 於 is another grammar word that can mean “in,” “at,” “to,” “from,” “by” and “then.” Throughout this paper, I try to find the appropriate word for the sentence and do not follow any strict rule of just using one translation.

MWD

居眾人之所惡⁸³，故，幾於道矣。

Line 3

居善地，心善淵，與善仁⁸⁴，言善信，正善治，事善能，動善時。

[A] good dwelling [is with the] earth, [a] good heart [is an] abyss, good partaking [is] benevolent, good talk [is] trustworthy, good uprightness [is done with good] management, good affairs [are handled with good] abilities, good activities [are done with good] timing.

MWD

居善地，心善淵，予善天，言⁸⁵善信，正善治，事善能，動善時。

Line 4

夫唯，不爭，故，無尤。

Now, only [because one does] not contend, therefore, [one does] not [commit any] fault.^{86 87}

MWD

夫唯，不爭，故，無尤。

Chapter 9 第九章**Line 1**

持⁸⁸，而盈之，不如其已。

[To] hold, yet fill, it [is] not like before.

MWD

慎，而盈之，不若其⁸⁹已。

Line 2

揣⁹⁰，而銳之，不可長保⁹¹。

[To] temper, yet sharpen, [it] cannot [be] preserved [a] long [time].

MWD

揣，而銳⁹²之⁹³，不可長葆也。

⁸³ In the MWD version B, wù 惡 (dislike or loathe) is yà 亞 (inferior).

⁸⁴ In the MWD version B, yǔshànrén 與善仁 (good partaking [is] benevolent) is yǔshàntiān 予善天 (good giving [is like the] sky), and in the MWD version A, these characters are omitted. In the MWD version A, rén 淵 (abyss) is xiāo 瀾 (deep and clear).

⁸⁵ In the MWD version A, yán 言 (speech) is yǔ 予 (give).

⁸⁶ The character wú 無 is commonly used in the *Dàodéjīng*. It can mean either “no/not” or “emptiness.” For example, chapter 28, line 2, wújí 無極 (utmost emptiness) and chapter 11 are all examples of wú being used as emptiness. Wúyù 無欲 (no desire) and wúmíng 無名 (nameless) are examples of wú meaning “no.”

⁸⁷ Using this idea of bùzhēng 不爭 or non-contention is a quiescence. See chapter 68, lines 1 and 2.

⁸⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, chí 持 (hold or grasp) is diān 楨 (the tip of a tree).

⁸⁹ In the MWD version B, ruòqí 若其 (like it) is rúqí 如元 (like it).

⁹⁰ The character chuāi 揣 can have different meanings depending on the tone and is normally pronounced “chuai.” In the context of this sentence, it is pronounced “zhuī” and means “to strike.” In the MWD version B, this character is duàn 鍛 (forge or temper, as in forge metal). In the Guōdiàn it is, tuān 湍 (rapids or rushing water).

⁹¹ In MWD versions A and B, bǎo 保 (protect or defend) is bǎo 葆 (preserve or nurture), and in the Guōdiàn, it is the same as the Wáng Bì.

⁹² In the MWD version B, ruì 銳 (sharp) is yǔn 允 (suitable, allow, fair), and in the Guōdiàn it is qún 群 (crowd, group or measure word).

⁹³ In the Guōdiàn, these four characters are: 湍，而群之。

Line 3

金玉滿堂⁹⁴，莫之能守⁹⁵。

[To] fill [a] hall [with] jade [and] gold, [there is] no capability [to] guard [it].

MWD

金玉盈室，莫之能守也。

Line 4

富貴，而驕，自遺其咎。

[To] be rich, yet proud, [brings] self-loss [and] its [own] blame.

MWD

富貴⁹⁶，而驕⁹⁷，自遺咎也。

Line 5

功遂身退，天⁹⁸之道⁹⁹。

[After a] deed [is] satisfied (finished), [the] body withdraws, [this is] the sky's Dào.

MWD

功遂身退¹⁰⁰，天之道也。

Chapter 10 第十章**Line 1**

載營魄抱一，能無離乎。

[Can you] bring [the] ethereal [and] corporeal souls¹⁰¹ together [as] one [and are you] able [to do it with] no separation?

MWD

載¹⁰²營魄抱一，能無¹⁰³離乎。

Line 2

專氣致柔，能嬰兒乎。

Concentrate [your] energy (breath) [to] attain softness, can [you be like an] infant?¹⁰⁴

MWD

專氣致柔，能嬰兒乎。

⁹⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, mǎntáng 滿堂 (full hall) is yíngshì 盈室 (full room).

⁹⁵ Depending on the context, this character shǒu 守 is either translated as “abide” or “guard.”

⁹⁶ In the Guōdiàn, fù 富 (rich or wealthy) is fù 福 (good fortune or good luck)

⁹⁷ In the Guōdiàn, jiāo 驕 (proud or arrogant) is qiāo 喬 (tall, lofty, proud).

⁹⁸ The character tiān 天 is normally translated as heaven but a more appropriate translation is probably “sky.”

⁹⁹ The characters: tiānzhīdào 天之道 ([the] sky's Dào) appear in chapter 73, line 4; chapter 77, line 1, and chapter 81, line 5. When zhī 之 is behind a word, the zhī 之 can be translated as “the” and then put in the front of the English sentence. In this way, the translation is more direct.

¹⁰⁰ In the MWD version A, tuì 退 (move back or retreat) is ruì 芮 (edge of the water).

¹⁰¹ In Chinese medicine, there are five spirits stored in the five yin organs, which can have an effect on emotions and psychology. The pó 魄 (corporeal soul) is stored in the lungs (and dies at death). Its counterpart is the hún 魂 (ethereal soul), which does not die at death and is stored in the liver. It is commonly thought that the word yíng 營 is another version of the word hún, even though there appears to be no substantial evidence for this.

¹⁰² In the MWD version B, zài 載 (to carry or hold) is dài 戴 (put on or wear).

¹⁰³ In the MWD version B, wú 無 is 毋; both are pronounced “wú” and mean “no” or “not.” This is the same in lines 4 and 6.

¹⁰⁴ This may be the earliest mention of some form of breath training in China, where Lǎozǐ indirectly recommends to breathe like an infant, which probably means to breathe naturally.

Line 3

滌¹⁰⁵除玄覽¹⁰⁶，能無疵乎。

[In] cleaning [and] eliminating [the] profound inspection, can [you have] no blemish?

MWD

脩除玄監，能無疵乎。

Line 4

愛民治國，能無知乎。

[In] loving [the] people [and] managing [the] state, can [you do it with] not knowing?

MWD

愛民治¹⁰⁷國，能毋以知乎。

Line 5

天門開闔，能為雌乎。

[In] opening [and] closing [the] sky's gate, can [you] be [the] female?

MWD

天門開¹⁰⁸闔，能為雌乎。

Line 6

明白四達，能無知乎。

[In] understanding [the] four reaches (everywhere), can [you do it with] not knowing?

MWD

明白四達，能毋以知乎。

Line 7

生之，畜之。生，而不有，為，而不恃¹⁰⁹，長，而不宰，是謂玄德。

Produced [and] raised.¹¹⁰ Produce, yet not [to] have, [to] act, yet not depend [on], [to] grow, yet not [to] slaughter. [This] is called profound quiescence.¹¹¹

MWD

生之，畜之。生，而弗有。####，長，而弗宰也。是謂玄德¹¹²。

Chapter 11 第十一章**Line 1**

三十¹¹³幅共¹¹⁴一轂，當其無，有車之用。

Thirty spokes together [make a] single hub, by its emptiness, [the] vehicle has use.

¹⁰⁵ In MWD versions A and B, dí 滌 (to clean, wash or cleanse) is xiū 脩 (repair or cultivate).

¹⁰⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, lǎn 覽 is jiàn 監, which can both mean “inspect.”

¹⁰⁷ In the MWD version B, zhì 治 (govern) is guā 桡 (the pointed end of an arrow).

¹⁰⁸ The MWD version B uses qǐ 啟 instead of kāi 開, they both mean “open.”

¹⁰⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, these four characters are omitted.

¹¹⁰ Chapter 51, line 5, has the same words: produce, yet not [to] have, [to] act, yet not depend [on], [to] grow, yet not [to] slaughter. [This] is called profound quiescence.

¹¹¹ In terms of the meaning of dé, see Appendix 1, pg. 163.

¹¹² In MWD version B, in line 7, bù 不 is fú 弗 and wèi 謂 (called) is wèi 胃 (stomach, which can also mean “called”).

¹¹³ In MWD versions A and B, sānshí 三十 (30) is sà 卅 (30).

¹¹⁴ In the MWD version B, fú 幅 (width or hem/margin) and gòng 共 (common) are bì 樞 (wooden board) and tóng 同 (alike or together). Both fú 幅 and bì 樞 are clearly trying to refer to fú; spokes (of a wheel).

MWD

卅#幅共一轂，當其無，有車之用也。

Line 2

埴埴以為器，當其無，有器之用。

Mould clay so [as to] make [a] vessel, by its emptiness, [the] vessel has use.

MWD

然埴，而為器，當其無，有埴器之用也。

Line 3

鑿戶牖以為室¹¹⁵，當其無，有室之用。

Chisel [a] door [and] window, so [as to] make [a] room, by its emptiness [the] room has use.

MWD

#戶牖###，當其無，有室之用也。

Line 4

故，有之以為利，無之以為用。

Therefore, [in] having, so [lies] the benefit, [in] emptiness, so [lies] the use.¹¹⁶

MWD

故，有之以為利，無之以為用。

Chapter 12 第十二章¹¹⁷**Line 1**

五色令¹¹⁸人目盲，

[The] five colours cause [a] person's eyes [to go] blind.

MWD

五色使人目盲¹¹⁹，

Line 2

五音令人耳聾，

[The] five sounds cause [a] person's ears [to go] deaf.

MWD (see line 4)

馳騁田獵，使人心發狂，

Line 3

五味令人口爽，

[The] five tastes cause [a] person's mouth [to go] bland.

¹¹⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, yǐwéishì 以為室 (so [as to] make a room) is omitted.

¹¹⁶ In this chapter, Lǎozǐ is comparing the opposing characters of yǒu 有 and wú 無; sometimes translated as being and non-being, in that they are like two faces of the same coin. The idea of duality is used throughout the entire *Dàodéjīng*. For example, chapter 1, line 4: these two [come] out [the] same, yet [are] named differently, both [are] called the profound. Chapter 2, line 2: therefore, [to] have [and] not [have] mutually create, difficult [and] easy mutually become, long [and] short mutually shape, high [and] low mutually lean, voice [and] sound mutually harmonise, front [and] back mutually follow. The idea of wúwéi 無為 is also an idea of opposites with wú being the nothing/ness and emptiness, while wéi 為 is action, movement or activity.

¹¹⁷ In chapter 12, we find the MWD versions in a different order.

¹¹⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, lìng 令 (cause) is shǐ 使 (make) and is the same throughout the chapter.

¹¹⁹ In the MWD version A, this line reads, 五色使人目明 ([the] five colours make [a] person's eyes bright).

MWD (see line 5)

難得之貨，使人之行方，

Line 4

馳騁畋¹²⁰獵，令人心發狂，

Galloping horses (horse racing) [and] hunting cause [a] person's heart [to] go mad.

MWD (see line 3)

五味使人之口爽，

Line 5

難得之貨，令人行妨。

Hard [to] get goods cause [a] person [to] do harm.

MWD (see line 2)

五音使人之耳聾。

Line 6

是以，聖人，為腹不為目，故，去彼取此。

So, [the] sage does [with his] abdomen¹²¹ [and does] not do [with his] eyes, therefore, [he] leaves that [and] gets this.

MWD

是以，聖人，之治也，為腹，而不為目，故，去彼，而#取此¹²²。

So, the sage, manages [by] doing [with his] abdomen and not [with his] eyes, therefore [he] leaves that, yet [he] gets this.

Chapter 13 第十三章

Line 1

寵¹²³辱若驚，貴大患若身。

[Take] favours [and] humiliations like surprises, value great troubles like [the] body.

MWD

寵辱若驚，貴大患若身。

Line 2

何謂寵辱若驚。

What [is] called [take] favours [and] humiliations like surprises?

MWD

何¹²⁴謂寵辱若驚。

Line 3

寵為下，得之若驚，失之若驚，是謂寵辱若驚。

Humiliations are below (disgraces), [to] get [them is] like [a] surprise, [to] lose [them is also] like [a] surprise,

¹²⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, tiánliè 畋獵 (go hunting) is tiànlà 田臘 (the first character is a field, the second can mean cured meat, or the end-of-year sacrifice that took place shortly after the winter solstice).

¹²¹ The abdomen probably refers to the stomach, and is a simile that means all one needs in life is to have enough food to be satisfied. The eyes are probably a simile for desires. See chapter 3, line 4: so, [the] sage manages [by] emptying the heart, filling the abdomen, weakening the will [and] strengthening the bones.

¹²² In the MWD version A, these last six characters are: 故，去寵耳此。They have the same meaning.

¹²³ In the MWD version A, chǒng 寵 (favour) is lòng 龍 (dragon), in the MWD version B, it is lòng 弄 (lane or alley). This variation is the same throughout the chapter.

¹²⁴ In the MWD version A, hé 何 (what, which) is kē 苛 (harsh or severe).

[this] is [what is] called [taking] favours [and] humiliations like surprises.

MWD

寵之為下，得之若驚，失之若驚，是胃龍辱若驚。

Line 4

何謂貴大患若身。

What [is] called value great troubles like [the] body.

MWD

何胃貴大患若身。

Line 5

吾所以有大患者，為吾有身，及吾無身，吾有何患。

[Because] I so have great troubles, [so] I have [a] body, if I [did] not [have a] body, what troubles [would] I have?

MWD

吾所以有大患者，為吾有身也，及吾無身，#有何患。

Line 6

故，貴以身為天下，若可寄天下。

Therefore, value [the] body as [though it were like everything] underneath [the] sky (world); as if [everything] underneath [the] sky could depend [on it].

MWD

故，貴為身於為天下，若可以寄¹²⁵天下。

Line 7

以身為天下，若可託¹²⁶天下。

The body is [like everything that is] underneath [the] sky (world); as if [all that are] underneath [the] sky could be entrusted [with it].

MWD

以身為天下，女何以寄天下。

Chapter 14 第十四章

Line 1

視之不見，名曰¹²⁷夷¹²⁸。聽之不聞，名曰希¹²⁹。搏¹³⁰之不得，名曰微。

[To] look [but] not [to] see [is] called disappearing, [to] listen [but] not hear [is] called rare, [to] struggle [but] not get [is] called faint.

MWD

視之，而弗見，名之曰微。聽之，而弗聞，名¹³¹之曰希。昏之，而弗得，名之曰夷。

¹²⁵ In the MWD version B, jì 寄 (depend on) is tuó 橐 (a sack or type of bag that opens on both ends).

¹²⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, tuō 託 (entrust) is jì 寄 (depend on).

¹²⁷ The characters yuē 曰 and wèi 謂 can both mean “call/ed,” “name/d” or “speak/spoke.” These translations are used except when it says míngyuē 名曰; in this case, “named” is always used for the translation, as the character míng 名 means “name.”

¹²⁸ It is interesting to note that the character yí 夷 means to “wipe out” or “exterminate” or “non-Han Chinese (barbarians)” in ancient Chinese. In the MWD versions A and B, yí 夷 (wipe out) is wēi 微 (tiny).

¹²⁹ In ancient Chinese, xī 希 means “a little.”

¹³⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, the character bó 搏 (fight or combat) is hūn 昏 (dark or dim). In the MWD version B, this hūn is preceded by a dé 德.

[To] look, yet not see, [the] name [is] called faint, [to] listen, yet not hear, [the] name [is] called rare, [to] console, yet not get, [the] name [is] called disappearing.

Line 2

此三者，不可致詰¹³²，故，混，而為一。

These three cannot [be] closely questioned, therefore, [they] mix and become one.

MWD

#三者，不可至計，故，混，而為一。

Line 3

其上不皦¹³³，其下不昧¹³⁴。

Its top [is] not bright, its bottom [is] not dark.

MWD

一者，其上不謬，其下不忽。

[The] one, its top [is] not confused, its bottom [is] not dim.

Line 4

繩繩¹³⁵，不可名，復歸於無物，是謂無狀之狀，無物之象，是謂惚恍。

Restraining [and] restraining, [it] cannot [be] named, again [it] returns to nothing, [it] is called the formless form, the image [of] nothing, [it] is called dim [and] indistinct.

MWD

尋尋呵，不可名，復歸於無物，是謂無狀之狀，無物之象，是謂惚恍¹³⁶。

Searching [and] searching ah, [it] cannot [be] named, again [it] returns to nothing, [it] is called the formless form, the image [of] nothing, [it] is called dim [and] indistinct.

Line 5

迎之不見其首，隨之不見其後。

Welcoming [it and you still can] not see its head, following [it and you can] not see its back.

MWD

隨，而¹³⁷不見其後，迎，而不見其首。

Follow [it], yet [you can] not see its back, welcome [it], yet [you can] not see its head.

Line 6

執古¹³⁸之道，以御今之有。

Grasp the ancient Dào, so [as to] have [it] driven [into] the now.

¹³¹ In the MWD version B, míng 名 (name) in this sentence is mìng 命 (life) in this chapter.

¹³² In the MWD versions A and B, zhìjié 致詰 (to cause questioning) is zhìjì 至計 (reach a plan or strategy). A translation for zhì is omitted in this line.

¹³³ In the MWD version B, the character jiǎo 皦 (bright) is miù 謬 (deceive or confuse), in the MWD version A it is shōu 收 (receive, collect, restrain, contract or put away).

¹³⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, bùméi 不昧 (not dark) is bùhū 不忽 (not all of a sudden or no neglect).

¹³⁵ The character shéng 繩 means “restraining,” Lǎozǐ may have chosen this character in the way the Dào restrains itself from being seen. In the MWD versions A and B, another character is used, which is xún 尋; in ancient China, this was a unit of measure equal to about eight inches, it also means “search,” “look for” or “seek.”

¹³⁶ In the MWD version B, hū 惚 (dim) and huǎng 恍 (indistinct) are hū 忽 (all of a sudden or neglect) and wàng 望 (distant). The character wàng is especially difficult to translate but probably means, in the context of this sentence, “to gaze into the distance,” therefore, the translation is distant.

¹³⁷ In MWD version B, suízhī 隨之 is yíngér 迎而.

¹³⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, gǔ 古 (ancient) is jīn 今 (modern or present day).

MWD

執今之道，以御今之有。

Grasp now the Dào, so [as to] have [it] driven [into] the now.

Line 7

能知古始，是謂道紀。

[To be] able [to] know [the] ancient beginnings is called [the] chronicles [of] Dào.

MWD

以知古始，是謂道紀。

Chapter 15 第十五章**Line 1**

古之善為士¹³⁹者，微妙玄通，深不可識¹⁴⁰。夫唯，不可識，故，強為之容。

The ancients [who were] good [at] being scholars [were] faint, mysterious, profound [and] open, [they were so] deep [you] could not know [them]. Now, only [because you] could not know [them], therefore, [I am] compelled to [describe their] appearance.

MWD

古之¹⁴¹為¹⁴²道者，微眇玄通^{141 142}，深不可¹⁴³志。夫唯，不可¹⁴³志，故，強為之容¹⁴³。

The ancients [who were] immortal [were with] the Dào, [they were] faint, mysterious, profound, reaching, [and so] deep [you] could not [know their] will. Now, only [because you] could not [know their] will, therefore [I am] compelled to [describe their] appearance.

Line 2

豫¹⁴⁴焉¹⁴⁵，若冬涉川¹⁴⁶。猶¹⁴⁷兮，若畏四鄰。儼¹⁴⁸兮，其若客。洩兮，其若冰¹⁴⁹之將釋¹⁵⁰。敦¹⁵¹兮，其若樸。曠¹⁵²兮，其若谷¹⁵⁴。混¹⁵⁵兮，其若濁。

Hesitating, like crossing [a] river [in] winter. Irresolute ah, like fearing neighbours [on] four [sides]. Dignified ah, like [being a] guest. Contaminating (dissolving) ah, like ice [that] will release (melt). Honest ah, like simplicity. Vast ah, like [the] valley. Mixed ah, like muddiness.

MWD

曰，與¹⁴⁴呵，元若冬涉川。猶¹⁴⁷呵，元若畏四鄰。儼¹⁴⁸呵，元若客。洩¹⁴⁹呵，其若凌¹⁴⁹澤。敦¹⁵¹呵，元若樸¹⁵⁶。春

¹³⁹ Towards the end of the Zhōu dynasty, there was a formal set of four occupations: shì 士 (scholar), nóng 農 (farmer), gōng 工 (craftsmen) and shāng 商 (merchants).

¹⁴⁰ In this sentence, the MWD versions A and B, shí 識 (know) is zhì 志 (will).

¹⁴¹ In the MWD version B, tōng 通 (open) is dá 達 (reaching).

¹⁴² In the Guōdiàn, these four characters are: 必非溺玄達 (must not indulge [in] profound reaching).

¹⁴³ In the Guōdiàn, these last five characters are 是以，為之頌 (so [as] to be lauded).

¹⁴⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, lines 1 and 2, yù 豫 (hesitant) is yǔ 與 (await) but some versions also put this in the Wáng Bì. It is unclear which is correct for the Wáng Bì.

¹⁴⁵ Yān 焉 (used in a rhetorical question).

¹⁴⁶ In the MWD version B, chuān 川 (river) is shuǐ 水 (water).

¹⁴⁷ In the MWD version B, yóu 猶 (just as, like) is yóu 猷 (plan or scheme).

¹⁴⁸ In the MWD version B, yǎn 儼 (dignified) is yán 嚴 (strict or stern).

¹⁴⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, bīng 冰 (ice) is líng 凌 (thick ice)

¹⁵⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, shì 釋 (release) is zé 澤 (pond).

¹⁵¹ In the MWD version B, dūn 敦 (honest) is hùn 混 (mixed), if pronounced with a different tone, hún means “muddy.” It seems both could be used but I chose mixed as the primary meaning.

¹⁵² In the MWD versions A and B, the next two lines are commonly flipped in order.

¹⁵³ In the MWD version B, kuàng 曠 (vast) is zhuang 莊 (village).

¹⁵⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, gǔ 谷 is yù 浴 (to bathe in the sun or wind).

¹⁵⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, hún 混 (mixed) is chūn 春 (spring).

¹⁵⁶ In the MWD version A, pǔ 樸 (simple) is wò 幄 (tent).

呵，汙若濁。曠呵，汙若浴。

[It is] said: awaiting ah, like crossing [the] water [in] winter. Planning ah, like fearing neighbours [on] four [sides]. Strict ah, like [being] a guest. Contaminating (dissolving) ah, like thick ice [in a] pond. Turbid ah, like simplicity. Spring ah, like muddiness. [A] village ah, like [the] valley.

Line 3

孰能濁以靜之徐清。

What [is] able [to change] muddy [water], so [that it is] gradually still?

MWD

##濁，而靜之徐清。

[If] muddy [water is] stilled, [it will] gradually [become] clear.

Line 4

孰能安以久動之徐生。

What [is] able [to turn] quiet [into] old (continuous) movement [that] gradually [produces] life?

MWD

##安以#重之徐生。

Line 5

保¹⁵⁷此道者，不欲盈，夫唯，不盈，故，能蔽不新成。

Protect this Dào [and do] not desire [to] fill [it], now only [because you do] not fill [it], therefore, [you are] able [to] hide [it and] not complete [the use of it].

MWD

葆此道#，不欲盈，夫唯，不盈¹⁵⁸，是以，能蔽¹⁵⁹，而不成。

Preserve this Dào [and do] not desire [to] fill [it], now only [because you do] not desire [to fill it], so [you are] able [to] ruin it, yet not complete [the use of it].

Chapter 16 第十六章

Line 1

致虛¹⁶⁰極，守靜篤。

Arrive [at the] utmost void, abide [by] genuine stillness.

MWD

致虛極也，守靜¹⁶¹篤¹⁶²也。

Line 2

萬物並¹⁶³作，吾以觀復。夫，物芸芸，各復歸其根。歸根曰靜，是謂復命。復命曰常，知常曰明。

[The] ten thousand things work together, I [just] observe [their] return. Now, things [are] multitudinous, each [will] return [and] enter its root. [To] return [to the] root [is] called stillness, [which] is called [a] return [to] life. [A] return [to] life [is] called [the] constant, [to] know [the] constant [is] called brightness.

MWD

萬物旁作，吾以觀其復也。天物##，各復歸於其根##曰靜。靜是胃復命。復命，常也，知常，#明也。

¹⁵⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, bǎo 保 (protect) is bǎo 葆 (preserve)

¹⁵⁸ In the MWD version A, yíng 盈 (full) is yù 欲 (desire).

¹⁵⁹ In the MWD version B, bì 蔽 (hide) is bì 敝 (ruin).

¹⁶⁰ Both the xūjī 虛極 and wújí 無極 can be quite close in translation. The character xú could be translated as “void” (as in an empty space). Whereas wú could be translated as nothingness (in the way that there is “no” thing) or emptiness.

¹⁶¹ In the MWD version A, jìng 靜 (still) is qíng 情 (emotion, sentiment, feeling).

¹⁶² In the MWD version B, dū 篤 (genuine) is dū 督 (supervise or direct), in the MWD version A, it is biǎo 表 (exterior).

¹⁶³ In the MWD versions A and B, bìng 並 (together) is pang 旁 (close by).

Line 3

不知常，妄作凶，知常容，容乃公，公乃王，王乃天，天乃道，道乃久，沒身不殆。

[To] not know [the] constant [is to] absurdly do inauspicious [things], [to] know [the] constant [is to be] tolerant, [to be] tolerant [is] to be fair, [to be] fair [is] to be kingly, [to be] kingly [is] to be [like the] sky, [to be like the] sky [is] to be [like the] Dào, [to be like the] Dào [is to last a] long time, [and to the time he is] without [a] body, [there is] no danger.

MWD

不知常，妄¹⁶⁴作凶¹⁶⁵，知常容，容乃公，公乃王，王乃天，天乃道，道乃#，沒¹⁶⁶身不#。

Chapter 17 第十七章**Line 1**

太¹⁶⁷上，下知有之，其次，親，而譽之，其次，畏之，其次，侮¹⁶⁸之。

[A] great ruler [is one that the people] below [him only just] know [that they] have [him as a ruler], next [is to] love and praise [him], next [is to] fear [him] [and] next [is to] insult [him].

MWD

太^上，下知有之，其次，親#譽之，其次，畏之，其^下，母^之。

Line 2

信不足焉，有不信焉¹⁶⁹。

[To] not [have] enough trust [is to] have no trust.

MWD

信不足焉¹⁷⁰，有不信#。

Line 3

悠¹⁷¹兮，其貴言。

Leisurely ah, those valuable words.

MWD

猷^呵，其貴言也。

Planning (carefully) ah, those valuable words.

Line 4

功成事遂，百姓皆謂我自然。¹⁷²

[To] accomplish [and] succeed [in] affairs, [the] hundred surnames all say, “I [am] natural.”

MWD

成功遂事，而百姓皆謂我自然。

¹⁶⁴ In the MWD version B, wàng 妄 (absurd) is máng 芒 (edge of a knife).

¹⁶⁵ In the MWD version A, xīng 凶 (inauspicious) is xīng 兇 (fearful or act of violence).

¹⁶⁶ In the MWD version A, méi 沒 (not have) is wù 勿 (it most likely meant “no” or “not” during this period in history).

¹⁶⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, tài 太 (great) is dà 大 (big).

¹⁶⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, wǔ 侮 (insult) is mǔ 母 (mother).

¹⁶⁹ Here we see the grammar word yān 焉 again, but in this case it is doubled up. This indicates is an affirmative tone.

¹⁷⁰ In the MWD version A, yān 焉 is àn 案 (but in this case has the same use as in ān), in version B it is àn 安, in the Guōdiàn it is ān 安 (in this case it is an adverb used in a rhetorical question).

¹⁷¹ In the MWD versions A and B and the Guōdiàn, yōu 悠 (leisurely) is yóu 猷 (scheming, planning).

¹⁷² For a discussion on zìrán 自然 (nature or natural), see Appendix 1, pg. 166.

Chapter 18 第十八章

Line 1

大道廢，有仁義。

[When the] great Dào [is] disregarded, [there is] benevolence [and] righteousness.¹⁷³

MWD

故¹⁷⁴，大道廢，案¹⁷⁵有仁義。

Line 2

慧智¹⁷⁶出，有大偽。

[When] wisdom [comes] out [there is] great falsity.

MWD

知慧出，案有大偽。

Line 3

六親不和，有孝慈。

[When the] six blood relations¹⁷⁷ [are] not [in] harmony, [there is] filial piety [and] parental affection.

MWD

六親¹⁷⁸不和，案有孝¹⁷⁹慈。

Line 4

國家昏亂，有忠¹⁸⁰臣。

[When the] state [and] royal house [are in] darkness [and a] mess, [then there are] loyal ministers.

MWD

國¹⁸¹家昏亂，案有貞臣。

Chapter 19 第十九章

Line 1

絕聖棄智，民利百倍。

Terminate [the sages [and] abandon wisdom, [the] people [will] benefit [a] hundred times.

MWD

絕聖¹⁸²棄知，民利百倍¹⁸³。

Line 2

絕仁棄義，民復孝慈。

¹⁷³ This line may be understood in the way that as soon as someone has expensive goods, he or she must protect them from robbers.

¹⁷⁴ Here, the character gù 故 (therefore) can be observed, meaning that this chapter clearly follows on from the previous one.

¹⁷⁵ In MWD version B, this is ān 安. The same change is made throughout the chapter.

¹⁷⁶ In the MWD version A, huìzhì 慧智 (intelligence and wisdom) is zhīkuài 知快 (knowledge and cleverness), in version B it is zhīhuì 知慧 (knowledge and wisdom).

¹⁷⁷ If not a direct translation, the six blood relations could just be understood as family.

¹⁷⁸ In the Guōdiàn, qīn 親 (relative) is xīn 新 (new).

¹⁷⁹ In the MWD version A, xiào 孝 (filial piety) is xù 畜 (raise).

¹⁸⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, zhōng 忠 (loyal) is zhēn 貞 (loyal), and in the Guōdiàn it is zhèng 正 (upright).

¹⁸¹ In the MWD version A and the Guōdiàn, guó 國 (state) is bāng 邦 (state).

¹⁸² See n.46.

¹⁸³ In the MWD version A, bèi 倍 (times as a multiplier) is fù 負 (to carry on ones back or be defeated).

¹⁸⁴ See n.179.

Terminate benevolence [and] abandon righteousness, [the] people [will] return [to] filial piety and parental affection.

MWD

絕仁棄義，而民復孝¹⁸⁴慈¹⁸⁵。

Line 3

絕巧棄利，盜賊無有。

Terminate skilfulness (cunning) [and] abandon profit, [then there will be] no bandits [and] thieves.

MWD

絕巧棄利，盜賊無有。

Line 4

此三者，以為文不足，故，令有所屬，見素抱樸，少私寡欲。¹⁸⁶

These three [are] not enough to be [a] doctrine, therefore, have [an] affiliation [with] seeing [the] plainness, embracing simplicity [and] lessening [the] self ¹⁸⁷ [with] few desires.

MWD

此三言也，以為文未足，故，令之有所屬，見素抱樸，少，而寡欲。

Chapter 20 第二十章

Line 1

絕學無憂，唯之與¹⁸⁸阿，相去幾何。善¹⁸⁹之與惡，相去若何。人之所畏，不可不畏。

Terminate study [and there will be] no worries, yes [to an elder] and yes [to a younger person],¹⁹⁰ how much difference [is there]? Good and evil, how different [are they]? [What] the people so fear, [you too] cannot, not fear.

MWD

絕學¹⁹¹憂，唯¹⁹²與阿¹⁹²，相去幾何。美¹⁹³與惡¹⁹³，其相去何若。人之所畏，亦不可以不畏人。

Line 2

荒¹⁹⁴兮，其未央哉。眾人熙熙，如享¹⁹⁵太牢，如登春臺，我獨泊兮，其未兆，如嬰兒之未孩^{196 197}。

[A] desolate [wasteland] ah, it [does] not end! All [the] people [are] prosperous, like enjoying (feasting) [themselves after the] great ox sacrifice, like ascending [the] platform [in] spring. I alone [am] anchored ah, [with] no omens, like [an] infant [with] no laughter.

¹⁸⁵ In MWD version A, cí 慈 (kind or loving) is cí 茲 (now).

¹⁸⁶ Sometimes Chinese sentences are backwards when compared to English, therefore, in some translations, such as in this line, I have had to flip the words at the back to the front.

¹⁸⁷ This idea of lessening the self may be the earliest mention in China of an ego-like concept. Sometimes this sī 私 character is translated as “selfishness.” In chapter 7, line 2, we can see that the character sī 私 cannot mean selfishness and must mean “self” for the Chinese sentence to make sense.

¹⁸⁸ Yǔ 與 can be translated as “and.” Yǔ can sometimes express doubt and is sometimes translated as “with,” where it means “to participate in.”

¹⁸⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, shàn 善 (good) is měi 美 (beautiful).

¹⁹⁰ Wéi 唯 may have been used by younger generations to answer elders and ē 阿, may have been used by older generations to answer younger generations.

¹⁹¹ In the Guōdiàn, this is wáng 亡 (to die, to lose, to flee) but is missing in the MWD.

¹⁹² In the MWD version A, ā 阿 is ā 訶 and in version B it is ā 呵. They all mean “ah.”

¹⁹³ In the MWD version B and the Guōdiàn, è 惡 (ugly) is yà 亞 (inferior).

¹⁹⁴ In the MWD version B, huāng 荒 (desolate) is wàng 望 (gaze into the distance).

¹⁹⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, xiǎng 享 (enjoy) is xiāng 鄉 (village).

¹⁹⁶ In the MWD version B, hái 孩 is ké 咳.

¹⁹⁷ The character ké 咳 (a baby's giggle or laugh) is also the alternative form of hái 孩 (child).

MWD

荒呵，元未央才。眾人熙熙，若鄉於大牢，而春登臺，我#博焉，#未挑，若嬰兒#未孩。

Gazing into the distance ah, it [does] not end. All [the] people [are] prosperous, like [in the] village at [the] great ox sacrifice, and ascending [the] platform [in] spring, I alone [am] rich, [with] no sacrifice, like [an] infant [with] no laughter.

Line 3

儂儂¹⁹⁸兮，若¹⁹⁹無所歸。眾人皆有餘，而我獨若遺。我愚人之心也哉。

Exhausted ah, like [having] no [place to] return [too]. All [the] people [each] have excess, yet I alone [am] like [I am] left behind. I [have the] heart [of a] stupid person!

MWD

#羃呵，如無所歸。眾人皆有餘，#我獨#遺，我愚人之心也#。

Line 4

沌沌²⁰⁰兮，俗人昭昭，我獨昏昏。俗人察察，我獨悶悶²⁰¹。

Confused ah. [The] layman [is] clear, I alone [am] muddled. [The] layman [is] spotless, I alone [am] depressed.

MWD

春春呵，俗²⁰²人昭昭 我獨若昏呵。羃人察察，我獨昏昏呵²⁰³。

Line 7

澹²⁰⁴兮，其若海，颺²⁰⁵兮，若無止。眾人皆有以，而我獨頑似鄙。

Peaceful ah, it is like [the] ocean, [a] wind in high places ah, as if [it] never stops.²⁰⁶ All [the] people [each] have [use], yet I alone am stupid [and] appear lowly.

MWD

忽呵，其若海，望呵，若無所止。眾人皆有以，#我獨門元以鄙。

Overlooking ah, it is like [the] ocean, gazing into the distance ah, as if [it] never stops.²⁰⁷ All [the] people, [each] have [use], my own gate's origin is lowly.

Line 8

我獨異於人，而貴食母。

I alone [am] different [from other] people because [I] treasure feeding [on the] mother.²⁰⁸

MWD

我獨²⁰⁹異於人，而貴食母。

I alone desire [something] different [compared to other] people because [I] treasure feeding [on the] mother.

¹⁹⁸ In the MWD version A, lěi 儂 (lazy) is léi 累 (tired), and in the MWD version B it is léi 累 (tired).

¹⁹⁹ In the MWD version A, ruò 若 (as if, like) is rú 如 (as if, like), and in the MWD version B it is yǐ 佻 (foolish).

²⁰⁰ In the MWD version B, dùn 沌 (confused) is chūn 春 (spring), and in the MWD version A, it is chūn 蠢 (foolish).

²⁰¹ In the MWD version B, mèn 悶 (depressed) is mǐn 閔 (which was a name), in the MWD version A, it is hūn 昏 (muddled).

²⁰² In the MWD version B, sú 俗 (customs) is yù 鬻 (to vend or sell).

²⁰³ In some versions of MWD B, this line is: 澹澹呵，羃人昭昭，我獨若悶呵，羃人察察，我獨閔閔呵。

²⁰⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, dàn 澹 (peaceful) is hū 忽 (overlook or neglect).

²⁰⁵ In the MWD version A, liáo 颺 (wind in high places) is wàng 望 (to gaze into the distance), in version B it is also wàng 望 but in a different script.

²⁰⁶ This line appears to be referring to the feeling of contentment when one does not have any desires or aspirations.

²⁰⁷ See n. 206.

²⁰⁸ The mother here probably refers to the Dào.

²⁰⁹ In the MWD version A, wǒdú 我獨 is wúyù 吾欲.

Chapter 21 第二十一章

Line 1

孔²¹⁰德之容，惟²¹¹道是從。

The appearance [of the] quiescence [of] emptiness only comes from [the] Dào.

MWD

孔德之容，唯道是從。

Line 2

道之為物，惟恍²¹²惟惚²¹³。

[If] Dào is [a] thing, [it is] only indistinct [and] only dim.

MWD

道之#物，唯望唯忽。

Line 3

惚兮，恍兮，其中有象，恍兮，惚兮，其中有物。

Dim ah, indistinct ah, [in] its middle [it] has [an] image, vague ah, indistinct ah, [in] its middle [it] has something.

MWD

忽呵，望呵，#中有象呵，望呵，忽呵，#中有物呵。

Line 4

窈²¹⁴兮，冥兮，其中有精²¹⁵，其精甚真，其中有信。

Obscure ah, dark ah, [in] its middle [it] has [an] essence, its essence [is] deep [and] real, [in] its middle [it] has trust.

MWD

幽呵，冥²¹⁶呵，#中有請呵，其請甚真，其中有信。

Line 5

自古及今，其名不去，以閱²¹⁷眾甫²¹⁸。吾何以知眾甫之狀哉²¹⁹。以此。

From ancient [times] up till now, its name [does] not go, so [that we may] examine [the] father [of] many [things]. How [do] I know the condition [of the] father [of] many! [It is] because [of] this.²²⁰

²¹⁰ Kǒng 孔 can either mean a “hole,” “opening,” “orifice” or “great.” What Lǎozǐ meant is unclear; kōngdé 孔德 could also be translated as “great quiescence.” Emptiness has been chosen as the translation for kōng.

²¹¹ In the MWD versions A and B, wéi 惟 (only) is wěi 唯 (only).

²¹² In the MWD versions A and B, huǎng 恍 (indistinct) is wàng 望 (to gaze into the distance).

²¹³ In the MWD versions A and B, hū 惚 (dim) is hū 忽 (overlook or neglect)

²¹⁴ In the MWD version A, yǎo 窈 (obscure) is yōu 幽 (secluded), in the MWD version B it is yòu 幼 (infant, child, immature).

²¹⁵ In the MDW versions A and B, jīng 精 is qǐng 請 (ask, invite, request).

²¹⁶ In the MWD version A, míng 冥 (dark) is míng 鳴 (cry of a bird).

²¹⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, yuè 閱 (examine) is shùn 順 (arrange).

²¹⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, fǔ 甫 (a term of address for a man – I have used “father” from MWD) is fù 父 (father)

²¹⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, zhuàngāi 莊哉 is rán 然.

²²⁰ Both lines 4 and 5 can come across very confusing but do follow strictly to Lǎozǐ’s theme of returning to the source (Dào). In chapter 47, line 1, the same idea can be observed as in lines 4 and 5, where Lǎozǐ says: without going out [the] door, know [everything that is] underneath [the] sky, without peeping out [the] window [you can] see [the] sky’s Dào. Chapter 48, line 1, also follows this same theme, where it says: [for] study daily increase, [for] Dào daily decrease, decrease [and] decrease until [one] arrives at non-action, non-action, so nothing [is] not done. It appears as though Lǎozǐ may be saying that by knowing the Dào, you can know everything there is to know.

MWD

自今及古，其名不去，以順眾父，吾何以知眾父之然，以此。

Chapter 22 第二十二章**Line 1**

曲則全，枉則直²²¹，窪²²²則盈，敝則新，少則得，多則惑。是以，聖人抱²²³一為天下式²²⁴。

Bent so as to become whole, crooked so as to become straight, hollow so as to become full, harmed so as to become new, little so as to have, much so as to become confused. So, [the] sage holds [on to the] one [and] becomes [a] pattern (model) [for everything that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD

曲則全²²⁵，枉²²⁶則正，洼則盈，敝則新，少則得，多則惑。是以，聖人執一以為天下牧。

Line 2

不自見²²⁷，故，明，不自是，故，彰²²⁸，不自伐，故，有功，不自矜，故，長。夫唯，不爭，故，天下莫能與之爭。

Not self-seeing, therefore bright, not self-existing, therefore clear, not boastful [of one] self, [and] therefore [to] have skill, not self-important, therefore long [lasting]. Now, only [because he does] not contend, therefore, nothing underneath [the] sky [is] able [to] contend [with him].

MWD

不自視，故，明²²⁹，不自見，故，章，不自伐，故，有功，弗矜，故，能長，夫唯，不爭，故，莫能與之爭。

Line 3

古之所謂曲則全者，豈²³⁰虛言哉。誠全，而歸之。

[What] the ancients so-called bent, so as to become whole, how empty [are these] words!? Sincere [and] whole, yet [also to] return.

MWD

古之所謂曲全者，豈虛言哉²³¹。誠全，而歸之。

[What] the ancients so-called completely bent, [so] few words! Sincere [and] whole [yet also] returning.

Chapter 23 第二十三章**Line 1**

希言自然，故，飄風不終²³²朝，驟²³³雨不終日。

²²¹ In the MWD version A, zhí 直 (straight) is dìng 定 (fix or stable), and in the MDW version B it is zhèng 正 (rectify, straighten).

²²² In the MWD versions A and B, wā 窪 (low-lying, depression) is wā 洼 (low-lying, depression).

²²³ In the MWD versions A and B, bào 抱 (hold) is zhí 執 (hold). For this idea of embracing the one, see chapter 10, line 1.

²²⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, shì 式 (pattern) is mù 牧 (in modern Chinese, this character means “to attend sheep,” in ancient Chinese, it means “to govern,” it also meant “a government official”).

²²⁵ In the MWD version A, quán 全 (whole) in jīn 金 (gold).

²²⁶ In the MWD version B, wǎng 枉 (crooked) is wāng 汪 (vast, expansive, deep).

²²⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, jiàn 見 (see) is shì 視 (look).

²²⁸ In the MWD version A, zhāng 彰 (clear) is míng 明 (bright), and in version B it is zhāng 章 (figured robe of officials). Some MWD versions have these flipped in order.

²²⁹ In the MWD version B, míng 明 (bright) is zhāng 章 (figured robe of officials).

²³⁰ The character qǐ 豈 means to “ask a rhetorical question.”

²³¹ In the MWD version B, qǐxū yányāi 豈虛言哉 is jǐyǔcái 幾語才。

²³² In the MWD versions A and B, zhōng 終 (end) is dōng 冬 (this can mean “winter,” or is an alternate form of dōng 咚, which means “bang” or “thud”).

²³³ In the MWD versions A and B, zhòu 驟 (sudden) is bào 暴 (sudden).

Nature speaks [a] little, therefore, stormy winds [do] not last [a] morning [and a] downpour [does] not last [the] day.

MWD

希言自然，#，飄²³⁴風不冬朝，暴雨不冬日。

Line 2

孰為此者，天地。天地尚不能久，而況於人乎。

What causes this? [The] sky [and the] earth. [The] sky [and the] earth still cannot last long, much less [those actions of] people!

MWD

孰為此#，##，天地，尚不²³⁵能久，而況²³⁶於人乎。

Line 3

故，從事於道者，道者，同於道。德者，同於德。失者，同於失。

Therefore, [in] engaging [with] affairs [and being with the] Dào, [one needs to be the] same as [the] Dào. [To be part of] quiescence, [one needs to be the] same as quiescence. [To be part of] loss, [one needs to be the] same as loss.

MWD

故，從事#，而道者，##，同於道，德者，同於德，失者，同於失。

Line 4

同於道者，道亦樂得之，同於德者，德亦樂得之，同於失者，失亦樂得之。

[To be the] same as [the] Dào [is to] also have happiness [with] the Dào, [to be the] same as quiescence [is to] also have happiness [with] quiescence, [to be the] same as loss [is to] also to have happiness [with] loss.

MWD

####，#####，同於德者，道亦#德之，同於失者，道亦#失之。

[The] same as quiescence, [the] Dào [is] also quiescence, [the] same as loss, [the] Dào [is] also loss.

Line 5

信不足焉，有不信焉。

[When there is] not enough trust, [then there is] no trust.

MWD

####，####。

Chapter 24 第二十四章

Line 1

企²³⁷者，不立，跨者，不行，自見者，不明，自是者，不彰，自伐者，無功，自矜者，不長。

[One who] stands on tiptoes [can] not stand, [one who] strides [can]not walk, [one who is] self-seeing [is] not bright, [one who is] self-existing [is] not clear, [one who is] boastful [of one] self [has] no skill, [one who is] self-important [does] not [last] long.²³⁸

MWD

炊者，不立，##，##，自視²³⁹者，不章²⁴⁰，自見者，不明，自伐者，無功，自矜者，不長。

²³⁴ In the MWD version B, piāo 飄 (whirlwind) is lì 栗 (tremble or shudder).

²³⁵ In the MWD version B, shàngbù 尚不 (still not) is érfú 而弗 (yet not).

²³⁶ In the MWD version B, kuàng 況 (condition or situation) is xiōng 兄 (brother).

²³⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, qí 企 (stand on tiptoes) is chuī 炊 (cook).

²³⁸ See chapter 22, line 2 for a very similar line.

²³⁹ See n.227.

Line 2

其在道也，曰餘食贅形²⁴¹。物或惡之，故，有道²⁴²者，不處。

In [the] Dào this [is also] called excessive food [and] superfluous appearances. Avoided [by] things, therefore, [this] has no dwelling (place) [with the] Dào.²⁴³

MWD

其在道也，曰餘食贅行，物或惡²⁴⁴之，故，有欲者，不處²⁴⁵。

Chapter 25 第二十五章**Line 1**

有物混²⁴⁶成，先天地生，寂²⁴⁷兮，寥²⁴⁸兮，獨立不改，周行，而不殆，可以為天下²⁴⁹母。

[There was some] thing mixed becoming, [it was] before [the] sky [and] produced [the] earth, still ah, silent ah, standing alone, [with] no change, moving cyclically, yet without danger (end), [it] can [be the] mother [of all that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD

有物混成，先天地生，蕭呵，漻呵，獨立，而不改，#####，可以為天地母。

Line 2

吾不知其名，字之曰，道²⁵⁰。

I [do] not know its name, the word [I use to] call [it is] Dào.

MWD

吾未知其名，字之曰，道。

Line 3

強為之名曰大，大曰逝²⁵¹，逝曰遠，遠曰反。

[If] forced to name [it], [it is] called great, great [is] called [the] passing of time, [the] passing of time [is] called far, far [is] called returning.

MWD

吾強為之名曰大，大曰筮，筮曰遠，遠曰反。

²⁴⁰ Both MWD versions A and B use zhāng 章 (figured robe of officials).

²⁴¹ In the MWD versions A and B, xíng 形 (appearance) is xíng 行 (behaviour).

²⁴² In the MWD versions A and B, Dào 道 is yù 欲 (desire).

²⁴³ It is likely that the theory of yin and yang is one that was purely based on the observation of the seasons. Winter cannot exist without summer and vice versa, the seasons are cyclic, there is hot in cold and cold in hot (in the way night and daytime temperatures vary), when the longest day reaches its zenith, then it switches to the opposite, whereby days start getting shorter. This chapter discusses this fourth idea of no zeniths, for if a zenith is reached, the opposite comes forth. We see this concept throughout the *Dàodéjīng* in various forms. Some examples include chapter 9, line 5: [after a] deed [is] satisfied (finished), [the] body withdraws, [this is] the sky's Dào. Chapter 15, line 5: protect this Dào [and do] not desire [to] fill [it], now only [because you do] not fill [it], therefore, [you are] able [to] hide [it and] not complete [the use of it]. Both chapter 32 and 44 use the characters 知止, which means, "know when to stop," or "know when enough is enough."

²⁴⁴ See n.83.

²⁴⁵ In the MWD version B, bùchǔ 不處 (no dwelling) is fújū 弗居 (no dwelling).

²⁴⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, hùn 混 (mixed) is kun 昆 (simultaneously), in the Guōdiàn it is chóng 蟲 (insects).

²⁴⁷ In the MWD version B, jì 寂 (still) is xiāo 蕭 (desolate), in version A it is xiù 繡 (rich and bright colours or embroidery).

²⁴⁸ In the MWD version B, liáo 寥 (silent) is liáo 漻 (quiet or silent), in version A it is mù 繻 (solemn or calm).

²⁴⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, tiānxià 天下 (under the sky) is tiāndì 天地 (sky and earth).

²⁵⁰ For a discussion on the Dào, see Appendix 1, pg. 163.

²⁵¹ In the MWD versions A and B, shì 逝 (pass or die) is shì 筮 (this is a type of divining rod).

Line 4

故，道大，天大，地大，王亦大。域²⁵²中有四大，而王居其一焉。

Therefore, [there is the] great Dào, great sky, great earth [and the] king [who is] also great. Within [the] realm [there are] four greats and [the] king's residence²⁵³ is one [of them].

MWD

#，道大，天大，地大，王亦大，國中有四大，而王居#一焉。

Line 5

人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。

Man patterns (models) [himself on the] earth, [the] sky patterns (models) [itself on the] Dào [and the] Dào patterns (models) [itself on] nature.

MWD

人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。

Chapter 26 第二十六章**Line 1**

重為輕根，靜為躁君。

Heavy is root [to the] light, quiet is [the] monarch [to the] irritable.

MWD

重為輕²⁵⁴根，靜為躁君。

Line 2

是以，聖人終日行，不離輜²⁵⁵重。

So, [the] sage travels [until the] end [of the] day [but does] not part from [the] baggage wagon.

MWD

是以，君子²⁵⁶冬²⁵⁷日行，不離其輜重。

So, a man of noble character travels [to the] end [of the] day [but does] not leave the baggage wagon.

Line 3

雖有榮觀²⁵⁸，燕處超然²⁵⁹。

Although [there are] glorious [places to] see [and] places [of] banquets, [he remains] detached [from them].

MWD

雖²⁶⁰有環官，燕處則昭若。

²⁵² In the MWD versions A and B, yù 域 (realm) is guó 國 (state).

²⁵³ This may refer to the place where the king sits.

²⁵⁴ In the MWD version A, qīng 輕 (light) is jīng 涇 (flowing water or underground stream). This is the same in line 5.

²⁵⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, zī 輜 (as a stand-alone character means “a carriage that has a curtain”) is zī 甗 (which is the name of an ancient earthen alcohol vessel but in this case is most likely a mistake by the scribe).

²⁵⁶ See n.300.

²⁵⁷ In the MWD version B, zhōng 終 (end) is dōng 冬 (this can mean “winter,” or is an alternate form of dōng 咚, which means “bang” or “thud”), in the MWD version A, this character is zhòng 眾 (multitudinous).

²⁵⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, yǒngguān 榮觀 is huánguān 環官 (the meaning of these words is unclear but they probably refer to a guesthouse).

²⁵⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, rán 然 (so; it is also an adjective suffix) is ruò 若 (as if, seems like, in the case of this sentence, it is used in the same way as rán).

²⁶⁰ In the MWD version A, suī 雖 (although) is wéi 唯 (only or but).

Line 4

奈²⁶¹何萬乘之主，而以身輕天下。

How [could] the lord [of] ten thousand rides (vehicles), himself, [tread] lightly [on all that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD

若何萬乘之主，而以身輕於天下。

Line 5

輕則失根²⁶²，躁則失君。

Light so as to lose [the] root, irritable so as to lose [the] monarch.

MWD

輕則失本，躁則失君。

Chapter 27 第二十七章**Line 1**

善行無轍²⁶³跡，善言無瑕謫²⁶⁴，善數不用籌²⁶⁵策，善閉無關鍵²⁶⁶，而不可開²⁶⁷，善結無繩約，而不可解。
Good travelling [leaves] no wheel track marks, good speech [leaves] no deliberate faults, good counting uses no counters [or] slips, good shutting [is] without [a] barrier [or] bolt, yet cannot [be] opened, [a] good knot [uses] no rope restraints (knots), yet cannot [be] untied.

MWD

善行者，無徹跡，善言者，無瑕適，善數者，不用櫛策，善閉者，無關籥，而不可啟也，善結者，無繩²⁶⁸約，而不可解也。

Line 2

是以，聖人常²⁶⁹善救人，故，無棄人。

So, [the] sage [is] constantly good [at] saving [the] people, therefore, no person [is] abandoned.

MWD

是以，聖人恆善救人，#，而無棄人。

Line 3

常善救物，故，無棄物²⁷⁰，是謂襲²⁷¹明。

Constant goodness rescues things, therefore, nothing [is] abandoned, [this] is called inheriting [the] brightness.

MWD

· # · 物無棄財，是胃申明。

²⁶¹ In the MWD versions A and B, nài 奈 (how) is ruò 若 (as if, seems like).

²⁶² In the MWD versions A and B, gēn 根 (root) is běn 本 (origin).

²⁶³ In the MWD version A, zhé 轍 (track of wheel) is chè 徹 (thorough or penetrating) or chè 弊 (in other MWD versions A), and in version B it is dá 達 (reach or attain).

²⁶⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, shāng 謫 (to consult, deliberate or commerce) is shì 適 (be fit, be suitable, be proper, to follow or pursue).

²⁶⁵ In the MWD version A, chóu 籌 (prepare, plan or a token for counting) is táo 櫛 (block of wood), in the MWD version B, it is tuán 筭 (to divine with bamboo slips).

²⁶⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, jiàn 鍵 (bolt) is yuè 籥 (lock).

²⁶⁷ In MWD versions A and B, kāi 開 (open) is qǐ 啟 (open).

²⁶⁸ In the MWD version B, shéng 繩 (rope) is mò 纆 (rope).

²⁶⁹ In the MWD versions A and B cháng 常 (constant) is héng 恆 (constant). This is such a common occurrence, I will not note it again.

²⁷⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, wù 物 (things) is cái 財 (valuables).

²⁷¹ In the MWD version A, xí 襲 (inherit) is shēn 申 (explain), and in the MWD version B it is yè 曳 (tow, pull or drag).

Things [do] not abandon riches, [this] is called explaining [the] brightness.

Line 4

故，善人者，不善人之師，不善人者，善人之資。

Therefore, good people [are] the not good people's teacher, [the] not good people [are] the good people's capital.

MWD

故，善^{##}，^{##}善人之師，不善人[#]，善人之資²⁷²也。

Therefore, good [is the] good people's teacher, [the] not good people [are] the good people's capital.

Line 5

不貴其師，不愛其資，雖智²⁷³大迷，是謂要妙²⁷⁴。

[Do] not value [the] teacher [and do] not love the capital, although [this] wisdom [is] greatly confusing, [it] is called [the] essential mystery.

MWD

不貴其師，不愛其資，雖²⁷⁵知^乎大迷²⁷⁶，是謂^眇要。

Chapter 28 第二十八章

Line 1

知其雄，守其雌，為天下谿。為天下谿，常德不離，復歸於嬰兒。

Know the male [but] abide [by] the female, [this is] to be [the] ravine [of all that is] underneath [the] sky. To be [the] ravine [of all that is] underneath [the] sky [is to] not part [from the] constant quiescence [and] again return [to the] infant.

MWD

知其雄，守其雌，為天下谿。為天下谿²⁷⁷，恆德不離²⁷⁸。恆德不離，復歸於嬰兒。

Line 2

知其白，守其黑，為天下式。為天下式，常德不忒²⁷⁹，復歸於無極。

Know the white [but] abide [by] the black, [this is] to be [the] pattern (model) [of all that is] underneath [the] sky. To be [the] pattern (model) [of all that is] underneath [the] sky, [is to be] constantly quiescent [with] no mistakes [and] again [to] return [to the] utmost emptiness.²⁸⁰

MWD (see line 3)

知其^白，守其辱，為天下^谿。為天下^谿，恆德乃足。恆德乃足，復歸於樸。

Line 3

知其榮，守其辱，為天下谷。為天下谷，常德乃足，復歸於樸。

Know the honour [but] abide [by] its dishonour, [this is] to be [the] valley [of all that is] underneath the sky. To be [the] valley [of all that is] underneath the sky, [is to] therefore, [be] full [in] constant quiescence [and] again [to] return [to] simplicity.

²⁷² In the MWD version A, zī 資 (capital or resources) is jī 齋 (to bring). This is the same in line 5.

²⁷³ In the MWD versions A and B, zhī 智 (wisdom) is zhī 知 (knowledge).

²⁷⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, yàomiǎo 要眇 (essential mystery) is miǎoyào 眇要 (minuscule essential).

²⁷⁵ In the MWD version A, suī 雖 (although) is wéi 唯 (only).

²⁷⁶ In the MWD version A, mí 迷 (confused) is mí 眯 (to be blinded).

²⁷⁷ In the MWD version A, xī 谿 (stream) is jī 雞 (chicken).

²⁷⁸ In the MWD version A, lí 離 is jī 雞 (chicken).

²⁷⁹ In the MWD version A, tè 忒 (error) is dài 貸 (to forgive), and in MWD version B it is dài 貸 (to borrow or lend).

²⁸⁰ Wújí 無極 could be translated as “the utmost of emptiness.” In this line above, a common theme within the *Dàodéjīng* can be observed, which is the idea of return or returning. See appendix 1, pg. 166 for further details.

MWD (see line 2)

知其白，守其黑，為天下式。為天下式，恆德不賁，恆德不賁，復歸於無極。

Line 4

樸散則為器，聖人用之則為官長，故，大制不割。

[When] simplicity scatters [then there] will be [an] implement, [the] sage uses [the implement, so there] will be [an] official, therefore, [a] great establishment [does] not cut.

MWD

樸²⁸¹散則為器，聖人用之則為官長，#，夫大制無割。

Chapter 29 第二十九章**Line 1**

將欲取天下，而為之，吾見其不得已²⁸²。

[One who] desires [to] take [all that is] underneath [the] sky and act [up on it], I see they [will] never obtain [it].

MWD

將欲取天下，而為之，吾見其弗得已。

Line 2

天下神器，不可為也。

[Everything that is] underneath [the] sky [is like a] spirit implement [and] cannot be acted [upon].

MWD

夫天下神器也，非可為者也。

Line 3

為²⁸³者，敗之，執者，失之。

[To] act [is to] fail, [to] hold [is to] lose.

MWD

為者，敗之，執者，失之。

Line 4

故，物，或行，或隨，或歔或吹，或強或贏，或挫²⁸⁴或隳²⁸⁵。

Therefore, things either move or follow, either breathe out through the nose or puff, [are] either [just] strong or [they are actually] winning, [things are] either flexed or [they are] destroyed.

MWD

#，物，或行，或隨，或歔²⁸⁶，或吹²⁸⁷，或強²⁸⁸，或贏²⁸⁹，或陪，或墮。

²⁸¹ In the MWD version A, pǔ 樸 (simplicity) is wò 幄 (tent).

²⁸² By adding the character yǐ 已, the “not” turns into “never.”

²⁸³ In this chapter, Lǎozǐ explains the idea of wéi 為, which means “to do,” “to act,” or “to be” and is the opposite of wú 無 or emptiness. As seen in chapter 2, these two cannot exist apart from each other, for according to Lǎozǐ, if there is no A, then there cannot be a B. Therefore, it seems as though Lǎozǐ combines these two opposing concepts into one: The action of emptiness.

²⁸⁴ In the MWD version B, cuò 挫 (flex) is péi 陪 (to assist), and in the MWD version A it is huai 坏 (bad/spoiled).

²⁸⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, huī 隳 (ruin) is duò 墮 (ruin).

²⁸⁶ In the MWD version A, xū 歔 (blow through the nose) is jǐng 炁 (shine or bright).

²⁸⁷ In the MWD version B, chuī 吹 (puff) is suí 隋 (the name of the Sui dynasty). In archaic Chinese, suí appears to have the following forms: 墮 (to fall, to degenerate), 惰 (lazy), 隳 (to destroy), and 橢 (oval-shaped container, long and narrow, oval-shaped or elliptical).

²⁸⁸ In the MWD version B, qiáng 強 (strong) is rè 熱 (heat).

²⁸⁹ In the MWD version B, yíng 贏 (win) is zuò 坐 (to bear).

Things either move or follow, shine or degenerate, [are] either heating or bearing [fruit], [are] either assisting or ruining.

Line 5

是以，聖人去甚，去奢²⁹⁰，去泰²⁹¹。

So, [the] sage [gets] rid [of] extremes, [gets] rid [of] extravagances [and gets] rid [of] grandeur.

MWD

是以，聖人去甚，去大，去楮。

Chapter 30 第三十章

Line 1

以道佐人主者，不以兵強天下。其事好還。

[When] the Dào assists [the] ruler [of] men, soldiers [will] not use force [on all that is] underneath [the] sky. These affairs [are] easy [at] coming back.

MWD

以道佐人主[#]，不²⁹²以兵強於天下。元^{###}。

Line 2

師之所處，荊棘生焉。

[The] dwelling where the troops are, thistles (weeds) [and] thorns [will] grow.

MWD

[#]之所居，楚棘²⁹³生之。

[In] this residence, suffering [and] protrusions [with be] produced.

Line 3

大軍之後，必有凶年。

After [a] great military [campaign there] must be [a] year [of] ill omens.

MWD

##之[#]，####。

Line 4

善者，果，而已，不²⁹⁴敢以取強。

Good [is to be] resolute, that is all, [do] not dare to take [with] strength.

MWD

善者，果，而已矣，毋敢以取強焉。

Line 5

果，而勿矜，果，而勿伐，果，而勿驕，果，而不得已，果，而勿強²⁹⁵。

Resolute but not self-important, resolute but not boastful, resolute but not arrogant, resolute because [you] have no [other] choice, resolute but without strength.

²⁹⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, shē 奢 (luxurious or extravagant) is dà 大 (big).

²⁹¹ In the MWD versions A, tài 泰 is chǔ 楮 (mulberry or paper) and in the MWD version B it is zhū 諸 (all).

²⁹² In the Guōdiàn, bù 不 is bùgǔ 不谷.

²⁹³ In the MWD version B, jí 棘 (thorns) is lì 枋 (protrusions).

²⁹⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, bù 不 (no) is guàn 毋, which is usually an alternate form of guàn 貫 (go through). In the MWD though, this character does seem to be used as a negative.

²⁹⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, this line is finished with: 居是胃果而強 ([the] dwelling is called filled yet strong).

MWD

果，而毋驕，果，而勿矜²⁹⁶，果，而#傷，果，而毋得已，居是胃果而強。

Line 6

物壯則老，是謂不道，不道早²⁹⁷已。

[When] things [are] robust, [then they] will become old, [this] is called not (following the) *Dào*, not (following the) *Dào* [is to have an] early end.²⁹⁸

MWD

物壯則老，是胃不道，不道蚤已。

Chapter 31 第三十一章**Line 1**

夫，佳兵者，不祥之器，物或惡之，故，有道者，不處。

Now, quality weapons [are] inauspicious implements, things may fear [them], therefore, [those that] have [the] *Dào* [do] not dwell [with them].

MWD

夫，#兵者，不祥之器也，物或惡²⁹⁹之，故，有欲者，弗居。

Now, weapons [are] inauspicious implements, things may fear [them], therefore, [those that] have desire [do] not reside [with them].

Line 2

君子居則貴左，用兵則貴右。

A man of noble character,³⁰⁰ [his] residence will value [the] left, [one who] uses soldiers will value [the] right.³⁰¹

MWD

君子居則貴左，用兵則貴右。

Line 3

兵者，不祥之器，非君子之器，不得已，而用之，恬淡³⁰²為上。

Weapons [are] inauspicious implements, [they are] not the implements [of] a man with noble character, [only when he] has no alternative [should he] use [them], harmony [and] indifference are [the] highest.

MWD

故，兵者，非君子之器也，兵者，不祥之器也，不得已，而用之，銛襲³⁰³為上。

Therefore, weapons [are] not the implements [of] a man with noble character. Weapons [are] inauspicious implements, [only when he] has no alternative [should he] use [them], using a hoe³⁰³ [in] attacks [is the] highest.

²⁹⁶ In the *Guōdiàn*, *jīn* 矜 (self-importance) is *qiáo* 喬 (tall, lofty, proud).

²⁹⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, *zǎo* 早 (early) is *zǎo* 蚤 (nowadays this means “flea,” but in this context clearly means early).

²⁹⁸ Here, another recurring theme can be found in the *Dàodéjīng*. By following the *Dào*, one may achieve longevity. This idea is mentioned by *Lǎozǐ* directly in chapter 59, line 3.

²⁹⁹ See n.83.

³⁰⁰ The idea of *Jūnzǐ* 君子 is especially notable in the works of Confucius. It is commonly translated as gentleman. The translation of gentleman seems to be too open ended though. A *Jūnzǐ* could be translated as “a man of noble character.” The idea of being or becoming a *Jūnzǐ* could also be seen as the ideal man, meaning that it is more of an aspiration than it is something that is actually achievable.

³⁰¹ In traditional Chinese thinking, yang is right (active) and yin is left (passive).

³⁰² In the MWD version A, *tiédàn* 恬淡 (harmony and indifference) is *xiānxí* 銛襲 (hoe attacks) and in the MWD version B it is *xiānlóng* 銛龍 (hoe dragon).

³⁰³ In the MWD, *Lǎozǐ* recommends using a hoe in attacks as the “highest” principle. A hoe is used by farmers and not by soldiers.

Line 4

勝·而不美·而美之者·是樂殺人。

Winning [is] not beautiful, [if it is] beautiful, [then one] is happy [to] kill people.

MWD

#·#勿美也·若美之#·是樂殺人也。

Line 5

夫·樂殺人者·則不可得志於天下矣³⁰⁴。

Now, [being] happy [to] kill people is [to] not [be] able [to] have wisdom [with all that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD

夫·樂殺人#·#不可得志於天下矣。

Line 6

吉事尚左·凶³⁰⁵事尚右·偏將軍居左·上將軍居右·言以喪禮處之。

Auspicious affairs esteem [the] left [and] inauspicious affairs esteem [the] right. [The] assistant general resides [on the] left, [the] chief general resides [on the] right, [that is to] say, [the chief general's] place [is at the] mourning ritual (funeral).

MWD

是以·吉事尚左·喪事³⁰⁶上右·是以偏將軍居左·上將軍居右·言以喪禮處之也。

So, auspicious affairs esteem [the] left [and] mourning affairs top (esteem) [the] right. So, [the] assistant general resides [on the] left, [the] chief general resides [on the] right, [that is to] say [the chief general's] place [is at the] mourning ritual (funeral).

Line 7

殺人之眾·以哀悲泣之·戰勝·以喪禮處之。

[To] kill [lots of] people, [to] mourn [and] weep [with] grief [and to] win [the] battle, [is to] place [oneself at] the mourning ritual.

MWD

殺人#眾·以悲依立之·戰勝·而以喪禮處之。

[To] kill [lots of] people is [to] stand [and] listen [to] weeping, [and to] win [the] battle [is to] place [oneself at] the funeral.

Chapter 32 第三十二章**Line 1**

道常無名樸·雖小³⁰⁶·天下莫能臣也。

[The] constant Dào [has the] nameless simplicity. Although small, nothing underneath [the] sky can subjugate [it].

MWD

道恆无³⁰⁷名樸³⁰⁸·唯小³⁰⁹·而天下弗敢臣#。

[The] Dào [has the] nameless simplicity. [It is] only small, yet nothing underneath [the] sky dares [to] subjugate [it].

³⁰⁴ The character yǐ 矣 can have two meanings. Classically, it is normally added at the end of a sentence where it is a particle of completed action. In this regard, it is similar to the modern usage of le 了. It can also be used in an exclamatory sentence.

³⁰⁵ In the MWD versions A and B and the Guōdiàn, xiōng is 凶 (inauspicious) is sāng 喪 (mourning).

³⁰⁶ The character suī 雖 means although or though. The character xiǎo 小 may also mean “cannot be seen.”

³⁰⁷ Some MWD versions have this as 無, while others use 无.

³⁰⁸ In the MWD version A, pǔ 樸 (simplicity) is wò 幄 (tent), some MWD versions A use wò 櫪 (a type of wooden plank temporary shelter/room) instead.

³⁰⁹ In the Guōdiàn, xiǎo 小 (small) is qī 妻 (wife).

Line 2

候王若能守之，萬物將³¹⁰自賓。

[If the] feudal lords [and] kings [are] able [to] abide [by it], [then] ten thousand things [them] selves will [be a] guest.

MWD

候王若能守³¹¹之，萬物將³¹²自賓。

Line 3

天地相合，以降³¹³甘露³¹⁴，民莫之令，而自均。

[The] sky [and the] earth mutually connect to descend sweet dew, [when the] people [are] not ordered [about, they them] selves [become] equal.

MWD

天地相合³¹⁵，以俞³¹⁶甘洛，###令³¹⁶，而自均焉。

Line 4

始制有名，名亦既有，夫亦，將知止，知止可以不殆。

[In the] beginning, names [are] made, [once there are] already names, [one must] now also know [when to] stop, knowing [when to] stop [and there] can [be] no danger.

MWD

始制有名，名亦既有，夫亦，將知止，知止可以不殆。

Line 5

譬³¹⁷道之在天下，猶川谷³¹⁸之於³¹⁹江海。

[Taking the] Dào [as an] example [for all that is] underneath [the] sky [is] like [a] river valley [that flows into the] rivers [and] ocean.

MWD

俾道之在天下也，猶³²⁰川³²¹浴之與江海也。

Chapter 33 第三十三章**Line 1**

知人者，智，自知者，明。

Knowing [a] person [is] wisdom, knowing [the] self [is] brightness.

MWD

知人者，知也，自知#明也。

Knowing [a] person [is] knowing, knowing [the] self [is] brightness.

³¹⁰ In this case, jiāng 將 is translated as “will.”

³¹¹ In the Guōdiàn, shǒu 守 is shòu 獸 (animal).

³¹² In this case, jiāng 將 should be translated as “will.”

³¹³ In the MWD versions A and B, jiàng 降 (fall or descend) is yú 俞 (approve).

³¹⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, lù 露 (dew) is lào 洛 (currently used most commonly as a surname).

³¹⁵ In the MWD version A, hé 合 is gǔ 谷.

³¹⁶ In the Guōdiàn, lìng 令 (order or command) is mìng 命 (order or command).

³¹⁷ In the MWD version A, pì 譬 (give an example) is bǐ 俾 (cause, enable, make), in MWD version B, it is bēi 卑 (inferior, humble, vulgar).

³¹⁸ In the MWD versions A and B and the Guōdiàn, gǔ 谷 (valley) is yù 浴 (bath or shower).

³¹⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, yú 於 is yù 與, the direct translation of yù would be “take part in,” which has been changed to “flows into.”

³²⁰ In the MWD version A, yóu 猶 (just as, like) is yóu 猷 (plan or scheme).

³²¹ In the MWD version B, chuān 川 (river) is xiǎo 小 (small) and in the Guōdiàn it is shǎo 少 (a little).

Line 2

勝人者，有力，自勝者，強。

Defeating [other] people [is to] have strength, defeating [the] self [is to be] strong.

MWD

勝³²²人者，有力也，自勝者，強也。

Line 3

知足者，富。強行者，有志。

[To] know contentedness [is to be] rich. [To] do [with] strength [is to] have aspirations.

MWD

知足者，富也。強行者，有志也。

Line 4

不失其所者，久。死，而不亡³²³者，壽。

[Do] not lose [yourself], so [as to last a] long time. [To] die, yet [with] no death [is to have] longevity.³²⁴

MWD

不失其所者，久也。死，而不忘者，壽也。

Chapter 34 第三十四章**Line 1**

大道泛³²⁵兮³²⁶，其³²⁷可左右。

[The] great Dào [is] extensive ah, it can [spread to the] left [and to the] right.

MWD

#道汎呵，亓可左右也。

Line 2

萬物恃之，而生，而不辭，功成不名有，衣養萬物，而不為主。

[The] ten thousand things depend [on it], yet [it] produces [with] no decline, [it] accomplishes [but] has no name (fame), [it] clothes [and] nourishes [the] ten thousand things but [does] not govern [them].³²⁸

MWD

#####，##，###，功成遂事，而弗名有也，萬物歸焉，而弗為主。

Achievement, accomplishment [and] success [in] affairs, yet to [have] no name (fame), [the] ten thousand things return and [are] not governed.

Line 3

常無欲，可名於小，萬物歸焉，而不為主，可名為大。

³²² In the MWD version B, shèng 勝 (win) is zhèn 朕 (I the sovereign).

³²³ In the MWD versions A and B, wáng 亡 (to die or to lose) is wàng 忘 (forget, overlook, neglect).

³²⁴ As a direct translation, line 4 can pose some difficulties in understanding. It may be that Lǎozǐ is saying, it is difficult to have both success over others and over the self at the same time. Having success over the self is to be content, which is the natural state of being. If you are in a natural state of being, which is contentment, you will live long. To give up having success over others, and instead to have success over the self, is to have a kind of death but without loss, as instead of being famous and successful (in the negative sense), one may achieve longevity. Throughout the *Dàodéjīng*, there is a theme of not competing or non-contention. This theme is especially represented by water. Some examples include chapter 2, line 4; chapter 3, line 1; chapter 8, line 1; chapter 22, line 2.

³²⁵ In the MWD version A, fan 泛 (extensive) is fan 汎 (extensive), and in the MWD version B, it is feng 汎 (sound of wind or sound of water).

³²⁶ Here I would like to remind readers again that in the MWD, 兮 is always 呵.

³²⁷ Here I would like to remind readers again that in the MWD, 其 is interchangeable with 亓.

³²⁸ See chapter 2, line 4 for a very similar line.

Constantly [with] no desire³²⁹ [it] can [be] named small (or hard to see), [the] ten thousand things return [to it], yet [it] does not govern [them], [it] can [be] named the great.

MWD

則恆無欲也，可名於小，萬物歸焉，而弗為主，可名³³⁰於大。

Line 4

以其終不自為大，故，能成其大。

[Because in the] end [it does] not [see it] self [as] great, therefore, [it] can become great.³³¹

MWD

是以，聖人之，能成大也，以其不為大也，故，能成#大。

So, the sage, [is] able to become great [because he does] not become great, therefore, [he is] able to become great.

Chapter 35 第三十五章

Line 1

執大象，天下往。

Hold [on to the] great image [and everything] underneath [the] sky [will] go [towards it].

MWD

執大象，天下往。

Line 2

往，而不害，安平太。

Going [towards it], yet [there is] no harm, [only] great safety [and] peacefulness.

MWD

往，而不害，安平³³²太。

Line 3

樂與餌，過客³³³止。

Music and cakes, passing guests [will] stop.

MWD

樂與餌，過格止。

Line 4

道之出口，淡乎³³⁴，其無味，視之不足見，聽之不足聞，用之不足既。

[When the] Dào exits, [it is] completely bland [and] it [is] tasteless, look [at it and there is] not enough [to] see [it], listen [to it and there is] not enough [to] hear [it], use [it and there is] not enough [to] finish [it].

MWD

故，道之出言也，曰淡呵，其#味也，視之不足見也，聽之不足聞也，用之不可既也。

Therefore, [when the] Dào [comes] out [and is] spoken, [it is] called bland ah [and] it [is with no] taste, look [at it and there is] not enough [to] see [it], listen [to it and there is] not enough [to] hear [it], use [it and it] cannot be done with.

³²⁹ Same three words as in chapter 1, line 3.

³³⁰ In the MWD version B, míng 名 (name) is mìng 命 (life, fate, command).

³³¹ In this chapter, Lǎozǐ describes the Dào. Here, once again, the theme of non-contention and duality can be observed, where because you have “A,” only then can you have “B.”

³³² In the Guōdiàn, píng 平 (peacefulness) is píng 坪 (level ground).

³³³ In the MWD versions A and B, kè 客 (guest) is gé 格 (to arrive).

³³⁴ “Completely,” has been added to emphasise the exclamation that comes with the character hū 乎.

Chapter 36 第三十六章

Line 1

將欲歛³³⁵之，必固³³⁶張之，將欲弱之，必固強之，將欲廢³³⁷之，必固興³³⁸之，將欲奪之，必固與³³⁹之。是謂微明。

[What you] desire [to be] inhaled must [be] firmly opened, [to] weaken desires [they] must [be] firmly strengthened, to abandon desires [they] must firmly rise [up], [to] seize desires [they] must [be] firmly given. [This] is called [the] faint brightness.³⁴⁰

MWD

將欲翕之，必古張之，將欲弱之，必古強之，將欲去之，必古與之，將欲奪之，必古予之。是謂微明。

Line 2

柔弱勝剛³⁴¹強。魚不可脫於淵，國之利器不可以示人。

Soft [and] weak win [over the] hard [and] strong. Fish cannot leave [the] deep pool, [a] state's sharp implements (weapons) cannot [be] shown [to the] people.

MWD

柔弱勝朕強。魚不可脫於淵，國#利器不可以示人。

Chapter 37 第三十七章

Line 1

道常無為，而無不為，侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。

[The] constant *Dào* [is] non-action,³⁴² so nothing [is] not done. [If] feudal lords [and] kings [are] able [to] abide [by it, then] ten thousand things will [them] selves transform.

MWD

道恆無³⁴³名，####，侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。

Line 2

化，而欲作，吾將鎮之以無名之樸。

[If in] transforming [there is a] desire [to] do, I will subdue [it with] the nameless simplicity.³⁴⁵

MWD

化，而欲作，吾將鎮³⁴⁴之以#名之樸。

Line 3

無名之樸，夫亦，將無欲。

[With] the nameless simplicity, now [there] also will [be] no desire.

³³⁵ In the MWD version A, xī 歛 (inhale) is shí 拾 (pick up), in the MWD version B, it is xī 翕 (shut).

³³⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, gǔ 固 (firmly) is gǔ 古 (ancient, old, in the past).

³³⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, fèi 廢 (to abandon) is qù 去 (to go, but can be used in the sense of to get rid of).

³³⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, xíng 興 (to rise) is yǔ 與 (to give).

³³⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, yǔ 與 (to give) is yú 予 (to give).

³⁴⁰ As a direct translation, this line may be the most difficult to understand in the *Dàodéjīng*. It may also be the most difficult to interpret and give meaning. According to the theory of duality that is presented throughout the *Dàodéjīng*, this line may mean, be aware of your desires first, so that you are able to overcome them. For if you are not aware of them, how can you conquer them?

³⁴¹ In the MWD version A, gēng 剛 (hard) is shèng 勝 (win), and in MWD version B it is zhèn 朕 (I the sovereign).

³⁴² For a discussion on non-action, see Appendix 1, pg. 164.

³⁴³ Some MWD versions omit 恆無.

³⁴⁴ In the MWD version B, zhèn 鎮 (subdue) is tián 闐 (fill up or rumbling sound).

³⁴⁵ Lǎozǐ consistently talks about having no desire, in this line, he discusses how exactly to do this. See Appendix 1, pg. 167.

MWD

³⁴⁶無³⁴⁷名之樸³⁴⁸，夫將不辱。

The nameless simplicity, now [there] will [be] no disgraces.

Line 4

不欲以靜，天下將自定。

[With] no desire [there] is stillness [and everything] underneath [the] sky will stabilise [by them] selves.

MWD

不辱以靜³⁴⁹，天地將自正。

[With] no disgraces [there] is stillness [and the] sky [and the] earth will [be] upright [by them] selves.

Chapter 38 第三十八章³⁵⁰**Line 1**

上德不德，是以，有德，下德不失德，是以，無德。

Upper quiescence [is] not quiescence, so [there] is quiescence. Lower quiescence [is to] not lose quiescence, so [there] is no quiescence.³⁵¹

MWD

上德不德，是以，有德，下德不失德，是以，無德。

Line 2

上德無為，而無以為，下德為之，而有以為。

Upper quiescence [has] no action, so nothing [has] action, lower quiescence acts, so [it] has action.

MWD

上德無為，而無以為也，####，####。

Line 3

上仁為之，而無以為，上義為之，而有以為。

Upper benevolence acts, so nothing [has] action, upper righteousness acts, so [it] has action.

MWD

上仁為之，而無以為也，上義為之，而有以為也。

Line 4

上禮為之，而莫之應則攘臂，而扔之。

Upper rites [have] actions, so [when there is] no response, then [it will] roll up [its] sleeves and throw [its arms] in the air].³⁵²

³⁴⁶ Some MWD versions start this sentence with 闡之以。

³⁴⁷ Some MWD versions omit the 無。

³⁴⁸ Just as in chapters 15, 28 and 32, in the MWD version A, pǔ 樸 (simple) is wò 幄 (tent or mosquito net). As mentioned previously, in some versions of the MWD version A, wò 幄 is wò 握。

³⁴⁹ In the MWD version A, jìng 靜 (still) is qíng 情 (emotion, sentiment, feeling), in the Guōdiàn it is cì 束 (stab).

³⁵⁰ This chapter marks the beginning of the dé 德 section of the book, which is commonly translated as “virtue” but in this paper is translated as “quiescence.”

³⁵¹ This line can be confusing as a direct translation but is very important in understanding this idea of quiescence. It could be understood that those who live by non-action (naturalness, non-interference) have upper (the highest level of) quiescence, those with lower quiescence (the next step down) still live with some form of action, whether it be benevolence or righteousness.

³⁵² As a direct translation, lines 1-4 can create some confusion. Lǎozǐ is ranking the levels of being a natural human or one in a natural state of being. From upper quiescence, to benevolence, righteousness, and finally to etiquette or rites. Rites or rituals are seen as the lowest level because according to Lǎozǐ, if you do not follow the rites, people tend to get angry. Lines 1-2 can be confusing as well, it appears as though Lǎozǐ is saying that upper quiescence is quiescence that is just naturally there,

MWD

上禮為之，而莫之應也，則攘臂，而乃之。

Line 5

故，失道，而後德，失德，而後仁，失仁，而後義，失義，而後禮。

Therefore, [when the] *Dào* [is] lost, so then [comes] quiescence, [when] quiescence [is] lost, so then [comes] benevolence, [when] benevolence [is] lost, so then [comes] righteousness [and when] righteousness [is] lost, so then [comes] rites.

MWD

故，失道，而後德，失德，而後³⁵³仁，失仁，而後義，失義，而後禮。

Line 6

夫，禮者，忠信之薄³⁵⁴，而亂之首，前識者，道之華，而愚之始。

Now, [in regard to] rites, [there is a] fine [line between] loyalty, trustworthiness and the beginning [of] disorder. Foreknowledge [is] the *Dào*'s illustriousness [and the] start [of] foolishness.

MWD

夫，禮者，忠信之泊，而亂之首也，前識者，道之華也，而愚之始也。

Line 7

是以，大丈夫，處其厚，不居其薄³⁵⁵，處其實，不居其華。故，去彼取此³⁵⁶。

So, now [a] great man, dwells in thickness [and does] not reside in thinness, [he] dwells in honesty [and does] not reside [in] illustriousness. Therefore, [he] leaves that [and] gets this.³⁵⁷

MWD

是以，大丈夫，居元厚，而不居元泊，居元實，而不居元華。故，去罷，而取此。

Chapter 39 第三十九章**Line 1**

昔之得一者，天得一以清，地得一以寧，神得一以靈，谷³⁵⁸得一以盈，萬物得一以生，候王得一以為天下貞³⁵⁹。

In the past [those that] had [the] one [were as follows]: [the] sky had [the] one, so [it was] clear, [the] earth had [the] one, so [it was] peaceful, [the] spirit had [the] one, so [it was] innately intelligent,³⁶⁰ [the] valley had [the] one, so [it was] full, [the] ten thousands things had [the] one, so [they could] produce [life], [the] feudal lords [and] kings had [the] one, so [the] ten thousand things underneath [the] sky [were] loyal.

whereas lower quiescence is when one is trying to be quiescent.

³⁵³ In the MWD version B, hòu 後 (behind, later, rear) jù 句 (which is kind of like a clause) in this sentence.

³⁵⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, bó 搏 (thin) is bó 泊 (it is an alternate form of 搏).

³⁵⁵ Here, the characters for thick or hòu 厚 and thin or bó 薄 can be observed. Ancient Chinese tended to lack vocabulary. This is sometimes quite apparent in the *Dàodéjīng*, where certain characters are used because of having no other better one. To deal with these characters in translation, one can either translate directly or choose a word that fits into that character that would be close to the direct translation. For example, hòu could be translated as dūnhòu 敦厚, which means “genuineness.” For bó 薄, which means “thin,” “flimsiness” can be used. The character shí 實 means “full” but can also mean “honesty” or “sincere.”

³⁵⁶ In the MWD version A, this line reads 故，去皮取此. Their meanings are the same.

³⁵⁷ See chapter 12, line 6 and chapter 72, line 5 for the exact same words: therefore [he] leaves that, yet [he] gets this.

³⁵⁸ See n.68.

³⁵⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, zhēn 貞 (loyal) is zhèng 正 (upright).

³⁶⁰ The character líng 靈 could be translated in English as “intelligence” but that does not quite explain the word well enough. Língxìng 靈性 means “intelligence” (especially of animals) and língmiào 靈妙 means “ingenious.” As Lǎozǐ's teachings and chapters revolve around being natural, “innately intelligent” (as this in a kind of natural instinct) seems to be the appropriate translation. In MWD versions A and B, this character is líng 𤝵, it is an alternate form of líng.

MWD

昔之得一者，天得一以清，地得一以寧，神得一以靈，谷得一以盈，萬物得一以生，候王得一，而以為天下正。

Line 2

其致之³⁶¹，天無以清，將恐裂，地無以寧，將恐廢，神無以靈，將恐歇，谷無以盈，將恐竭，萬物無以生，將恐威，候王無以貴高，將恐蹶。

Such results [can occur: when the] sky [is] not clear fear [it] will crack, [when the] earth [is] not peaceful, fear [it] will lie waste, [when the] spirit [is] not innately intelligent, fear [it] will stop, [when the] valley [is] not full, fear [it] will be barren, [when the] ten thousand things [are] not producing [life], fear [they] will [be] wiped out, [when the] feudal lords [and] kings [do] not value [the] high,³⁶² fear [everything] will fall.

MWD

元致之也，胃天毋已清，將恐#胃地毋已寧，將恐發胃神毋已靈，將恐歇胃谷毋已盈，將恐渴，#####，###胃候王毋已貴高，將恐蹶。

Such results [can occur: the first is] called [when the] sky [is] not already clear, [have] fear, [the second is] called [when the] earth [is] not already peaceful, fear [it] will develop [into a waste land], [the fourth is] called [when the] spirit [is] not already innately intelligent, fear [it] will stop, [the fifth is] called [when the] valley [is] not already full, fear [it will be] thirsty, [the sixth is] called [when the] feudal lords [and] kings [do] not already value [the] high, fear [everything] will fall.

Line 3

故，貴以賤為³⁶³本，高以下為基。

Therefore, value [what] is lowly (humility) [as] the root [and] esteem [what] is below (humbleness) [as] the foundation.³⁶⁴

MWD

故，必貴，而以下為本，必高矣，而下為基。

Line 4

是以，候王自稱孤，寡，不穀，此非以賤為本邪非乎。

So, [the] feudal lords [and] kings call themselves fatherless, widowed [and] unworthy,³⁶⁵ is [this] not [to take what] is lowly as [one's] root?

MWD

夫，是以，候王自胃#孤，#，##，此#元賤之為本與非也。

Line 5

故，至數譽³⁶⁶無譽。不欲瑋瑋³⁶⁷如玉，珞珞³⁶⁸如石。

Therefore, [to have] lots [of] praise [is to have] no praise. [Do] not desire [for things to] tinkle like jade or chime like stones.

³⁶¹ These three characters can be translated as “when” or could be translated as “causes” or “result in.”

³⁶² As mentioned previously, there does appear to be a lack of vocabulary in ancient Chinese, hence, some words translated appear to be odd. This line could read, “when kings do not value being upright in character.”

³⁶³ Wéi 為 is a commonly used character, it is sometimes used as a noun, where it means “action.” In other places, it is used as a verb, where it means “to do.” In this sentence, it is a kind of grammar word and can be translated as “the.”

³⁶⁴ Here again, there is a kind of lack of vocabulary, where “esteem” as a direct translation would be “high.” The same problem applies to “lowly” and “below,” hence, the close bracket translations have been added.

³⁶⁵ In ancient China, the emperor, when referring to himself in the first person, used the words guǎ rén 寡人. The character guǎ 寡 means widowed, and rén 人 means person. Here, Lǎozǐ is explaining the use of such words.

³⁶⁶ In MWD version A, yù 譽 (reputation or fame) is yǔ 與 (give), in the MWD version B, it is yú 輿 (chariot, carriage).

³⁶⁷ In the MWD version B, lùlù 瑋瑋 (precious stone) is lùlù 祿祿 (blessing, happiness, prosperity).

³⁶⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, luòluò 珞珞 (necklace) is luòluò 硌硌 (something hard, sharp or uneven).

MWD

故，至數輿無輿。是故，不欲瑋瑋若玉，硌硌若石。

Chapter 40 第四十章**Line 1**

反者，道之動，弱者，道之用。

Returning [is] the movement [of the] Dào, weakness [is what] the Dào uses.

MWD

反³⁶⁹也者，道之動³⁷⁰也，弱者，道之用。

Line 2

天下萬物生於有，有生於無。

[The] ten thousand things [that are] underneath [the] sky [are] born from having [but] having [is] born from emptiness.³⁷¹

MWD

天下之物生於有，有#於無。

Chapter 41 第四十一章**Line 1**

上士聞道，勤，而行之，中士聞道，若存若亡，下士聞道，大笑之。不笑，不足以為道。

[A] high [level] scholar hears [about the] Dào [and] diligently walks [it], [a] middle [level] scholar hears [about the] Dào [and] kind [of] cherishes [but also] kind [of] ignores [it], [a] low [level] scholar hears [about the] Dào [and] laughs. [If he did] not laugh, [it does] not deserve [to be the] Dào.

MWD

上##道，堇，而行之，中士聞道，若存若亡，下士聞道，大笑之。弗笑，##以為道。

Line 2

故，建言有之，明道若昧³⁷²，進道若³⁷³退，夷道若³⁷⁴類，上德若谷³⁷⁴，大白若辱，廣德若不足，建德若偷，質真若渝³⁷⁵，大方無隅³⁷⁶，大器晚³⁷⁷成，大音希聲，大象無刑³⁷⁸，道隱無名。

Therefore, [some] sayings are: [the] bright Dào [is] like [it is] concealed; approaching [the] Dào [is] like backing away; [the] level [and flat] Dào [is] like [it is] knotted; upper quiescence [is] like [a] valley; [a] great brightness (to become known) [is] like [a] disgrace; extensive quiescence [is] like [it is] lacking; established quiescence [is] like [it is] stealthy; [the] unadorned [and] unaffected [seem] like [they are] changing (mixing); [a] big square [has] no corners; [a] big implement [is] late [in] completion; [a] big voice hardly [has any] sound; [the] big image [has] no form; [the] hidden Dào [is] nameless.

³⁶⁹ In the Guōdiàn, fǎn 反 (reverse) is fǎn 返 (return).

³⁷⁰ In the Guōdiàn, dòng 動 (move) is tóng 僮 (an alternate form of dòng).

³⁷¹ This chapter follows on from the theme presented in chapter 11. Chapter 11, line 4 says: therefore, [in] having, so [lies] the benefit, [in] emptiness so [lies] the use. The difference here is that Lǎozǐ says, something has to come from nothing. This idea is also used in chapter 1, line 2: nameless, the start [of the] sky [and the] earth. [To] have [a] name, the mother [of] ten thousand things. It is also used in chapter 4, line 5 says: I [do] not know whose child [it is], [its] form precedes God.

³⁷² In the MWD version B, mò 昧 (dark or gloomy) is fèi 費 (spend, cost, expend).

³⁷³ In the MWD version B, all the ruò 若 (as if, like) in the sentence are rú 如 (as if, like).

³⁷⁴ See n.68.

³⁷⁵ These four characters pose difficulties in translating as a sentence. I have taken zhì 質 to mean zhìpǔ 質樸 (unadorned) and zhēn 真 to mean chúnzhēn 純真 (unaffected), while yú 渝 is taken to mean change.

³⁷⁶ In the MWD version B, yú 隅 (corner or nook or remote place) is yú 禺 (most likely an alternate form of 隅).

³⁷⁷ In the MWD version A, wǎn 晚 (evening, night, late) is miǎn 免 (spare, excuse, evade), and in the Guōdiàn it is màn 曼 (beautiful, vast, large and long).

³⁷⁸ In the MWD version B, xíng 形 (shape) is xíng 刑 (punishment).

MWD

是以，建言有之，曰，明道若昧，進道若退，夷道若類，上德若浴，大白若辱，廣德若不足，建德若#，質###，大方#隅，大器晚成，大音希聲，大象無形，道隱無名。

Line 3

夫，唯道，善貸且成。

Now, [it is] only [the] Dào [that is] good [at] granting and accomplishing.

MWD

夫，唯道，善始且善成。

Now, [it is] only [the] Dào [that is] good [at] starting and good [at] accomplishing.

Chapter 42 第四十二章**Line 1**

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。

[The] Dào produces one, one produces two, two produces three [and] three produces [the] ten thousand things.³⁷⁹

MWD

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生##。

Line 2

萬物負負陰，而抱陽，沖氣以為和。

[The] ten thousand things carry yin [on their] back [and] hold yang [in their] arms, [the] mixing [of] energy is [what makes] the harmony.³⁸⁰

MWD

#####，###，沖氣³⁸¹以為和。

Line 3

人之所惡，唯孤，寡，不穀，而王公以為稱。

[What] people so dislike; fatherless, widowed [and] unworthy, yet [this is what] the kings [and] dukes call themselves.³⁸²

MWD

天下之所惡³⁸³，唯孤，寡，不穀，而王公以自名也。

Line 4

故，物或損之，而益，或益之，而損。

Therefore, things [are] either decreased, so [as to be] increased or increased, so [as to be] decreased.

MWD

#，勿或損之，云之，而益#，#損。

Line 5

人之所教，我亦教之，強梁者，不得其死，吾將以為教父。

³⁷⁹ This 1, 2, 3 follows the trinity model of the sky, earth and man. See 《太上老君中經.卷上》 *Tàishàng Lǎojūn Zhōngjīng*. The sky is 1, the earth is 2 and man is 3. It also follows on from the idea within the *Book of Changes*, where the one solid horizontal line splits into two horizontal lines, and then these, when combined in different variations, make up the three lines of each of the eight trigrams.

³⁸⁰ This is the only place in the *Dàodéjīng* where the words yin and yang are specifically mentioned.

³⁸¹ In some versions of the MWD *chōng qì* 沖氣 is omitted.

³⁸² Here there is a kind of repetition of chapter 39, line 4: so, [the] feudal lords [and] kings call themselves, fatherless, widowed [and] unworthy, is [this] not [to take what] is lowly as [one's] root?

³⁸³ In the MWD version B, these five characters are 人之所亞.

[What] people so teach, I also teach, [the] tyrannical [do] not have [a natural] death, I will [take this] as [the] father [of all] teachings.

MWD

故·人##教·夕議而教人·故·強良者·不得#死·吾將以為學父。

Therefore, people teach [in the] evening discussions [where] the people [are] taught, [that the] strong [and] straightforward [do] not have [a natural] death, I will [take this] as [the] father [of all] studies.

Chapter 43 第四十三章

Line 1

天下之至柔·馳騁天下之至堅·無有入無間³⁸⁴。

[When everything that is] underneath [the] sky arrives [at being] soft, [horses will] gallop over [the] hardest underneath [the] sky, [the] intangible (or that without form) [can] enter into [that which has] no gap.³⁸⁵

MWD

天下之至柔·馳騁於³⁸⁶天下之至³⁸⁷堅·無有入於無間。

Line 2

吾是以·知無為之有益。

So, I [therefore] know [that] non-action has benefit.

MWD

吾³⁸⁸是以·知無為##益也。

Line 3

不言之教·無為之益·天下希及之。

Teaching without words,³⁸⁹ the benefit [of] non-action, hardly [anything that is] underneath [the] sky [can] catch it.

MWD

不##教·無為之益·#下希能及之³⁹⁰。

Chapter 44 第四十四章

Line 1

名與身孰親·身與貨孰多·得與亡孰病。

[Your] name or body, which [is] dearer? [Your] body or your possessions, which [is] more [important]? [To] have or to lose, which is [the] disease?

MWD

名與身孰親³⁹¹·身與貨孰多·得與亡孰病。

Line 2

是故·甚愛必大費·多藏必厚亡。

³⁸⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, jiàn 間 (gap) is jiàn 間 (gap).

³⁸⁵ From the next line, it can be observed that Lǎozǐ is giving an example of the benefit of wúwéi. It seems that Lǎozǐ is saying, as he says throughout the entire *Dàodéjīng*, that by using wúwéi, anything is achievable or can be done. In other words, this odd line is talking about the miraculous benefits of wúwéi.

³⁸⁶ In the MWD version A, wū 於 (alas) is added, and in version B, hū 乎 (alas) is used instead.

³⁸⁷ In the MWD version A, zhì 至 (arrive or reach) is zhì 致 (send, extend, deliver).

³⁸⁸ In the MWD version A, wú 吾 (I) is wǔ 五 (five).

³⁸⁹ Chapter 2, line 3 is similar: teaches [by] doing [and] not speaking.

³⁹⁰ In the MWD version B, zhī 之 is yǐ 矣.

³⁹¹ In the Guōdiàn, qīn 親 (relatives) is xīn 新 (new).

So therefore, deep love must [come at a] great cost [and] lots [of] hoarding must [have] ample losses.

MWD

##，甚####，####亡。

Line 3

知足不辱，知止不殆，可以長久。

Know [what is] sufficient [in order to have] no disgrace, know [when to] stop [in order to have] no danger, [only then one] can long endure.

MWD

故，知足不辱，知止不殆，可以長久。

Chapter 45 第四十五章

Line 1

大成若缺³⁹²，其用不弊，大盈若沖，其用不窮。

Great accomplishment appears lacking, [in] its use [it does] no harm, great fullness appears empty, [in] its use [it] has no limit.

MWD

大成若缺，其用不弊，大盈若沖，元用不窮。

Line 2

大直若屈，大巧若拙，大辯若訥³⁹³。

Great straightness appears bent, great skill appears clumsy, great debating appears inarticulate.

MWD

大直如屈³⁹⁴，大巧若拙³⁹⁵，大辯³⁹⁶如炳。

Line 3

躁³⁹⁷勝寒，靜勝熱，清靜為天下正。

Irritability defeats [the] cold, stillness defeats heat, [to be] clear [and] still [is] the correct [way for all that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD

趨勝³⁹⁸寒，靜勝熱³⁹⁹，請靜可以為天下正⁴⁰⁰。

Hasty defeats [the] cold, quiet defeats daylight, clear quietness can make [everything that is] underneath [the] sky upright.

³⁹² I generally try to translate dà 大 as “big” but sometimes “great” fits better. I try not to use “great” as tài 太 generally means “great.” I translate ruò 若 as “like,” as this is the most direct translation but sometimes “appear/s” is more appropriate.

³⁹³ In the MWD version A, nè 訥 (to speak slowly) is bǐng 炳 (bright or luminous), in the MWD version B it is chù 絀 (inadequate, insufficient) and in the Guōdiàn it is qū 屈 (bent).

³⁹⁴ In the MWD version A, qū 屈 (bent) is qū 屈 (bend).

³⁹⁵ In the MWD version B, zhuō 拙 (clumsy, awkward, dull) is jué 掘 (dig or excavate), and in the Guōdiàn it is qū 屈 (bend).

³⁹⁶ In the MWD version A, biàn 辯 (argue, dispute) is yíng 贏 (win).

³⁹⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, zào 躁 (irritable) is zào 趨 (hasty).

³⁹⁸ In the MWD version B, shèng 勝 is zhèn 朕 (I the sovereign).

³⁹⁹ In the MWD version A, these three characters read jìngshèngjìng 靜勝靜 (quiet defeats daylight).

⁴⁰⁰ In the Guōdiàn, these last lines read: 清靜為天下定 (clear [and] clear[er] makes [everything] under [the] sky stable).

Chapter 46 第四十六章

Line 1

天下有道，卻走馬以糞，天下無道，戎馬生於郊。

[When everything that is] underneath [the] sky has Dào, galloping horses (fine horses) go back to [being used for their] dung, [when everything that is] underneath [the] sky [does] not [have the] Dào, war horses [give] birth [in the] outskirts [of the city].⁴⁰¹

MWD

天下有道，卻走馬以糞，天下無道，戎馬生於郊。

Line 2

罪莫大於欲⁴⁰²，禍莫大於不知足⁴⁰³，咎莫大於欲得。

[There is] no greater crime than desire, [there is] no greater disaster than not knowing [what is] enough [and there is] no greater mistake than having desire⁴⁰⁴.

MWD

罪莫大於欲，禍⁴⁰⁵#####，咎莫大⁴⁰⁶於欲得。

Line 3

故，知足之足，常足矣。

Therefore, know [when] enough [is] enough, [this is to] constantly [have] enough.

MWD

#，####，常足矣。

Chapter 47 第四十七章

Line 1

不出戶，知天下，不闚⁴⁰⁷牖，見⁴⁰⁸天道。

Without going out [the] door, know [everything that is] underneath [the] sky, without peeping out [the] window [you can] see [the] sky's Dào.

MWD

不出於戶，以知天下，不窺於牖，以知天道。

Line 2

其出彌⁴⁰⁹遠，其知彌少。

[The] further [one] goes, [the] less [one] knows.

⁴⁰¹ In this sentence, two types of horses are mentioned. The first is zǒumǎ 走馬 or galloping horses, which could also be translated as “fine horses.” The second is róngmǎ 戎馬, the róng 戎 comes from xīróng 西戎, as it was this area that commonly provided horses to China (Ramsden, 2021, p. 37).

⁴⁰² These five characters are omitted in many versions of the *Dàodéjīng* within China.

⁴⁰³ Here, once again, a word can be found that seems to be used due to a lack of vocabulary; zú 足 normally means “enough,” “ample,” “sufficient” or “full.” Lǎozǐ uses this form of zú in numerous places, such as chapter 44, line 3 and chapter 28, line 3.

⁴⁰⁴ A core theme within Lǎozǐ is to have no desires. He mentions this idea of no desires in chapter 1, line 3; chapter 3, line 5; chapter 34, line 3; chapter 37, line 3, and chapter 57, line 3. The opposite of having desires is contentment, and Lǎozǐ recommends dealing with the problem of desires through simplicity (in living), see chapter 37, line 3.

⁴⁰⁵ In the Guōdiàn, huò 禍 (misfortune, disaster) is jiù 咎 (fault, blame or bad fortune).

⁴⁰⁶ In the MWD version A, dà 大 is cǎn 慙 (miserable, or tragic).

⁴⁰⁷ In the MWD version A, kuī 闚 (peep) is guī 規 (plan, or scheme), and in the MWD version B it is kuī 窺 (glimpse).

⁴⁰⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, jiàn 見 (see) is zhī 知 (know).

⁴⁰⁹ The modern equivalent to mí 彌 is yuè 越.

MWD

亓出也，彌遠者，亓知彌#。

Line 3

是以，聖人不行，而知，不見，而名，不為，而成。

So, [the] sage [does] not do, yet [he] knows, [does] not see, yet [he can] name [things], [he does] not do, yet [he] accomplishes.⁴¹⁰

MWD

##，####，##，##，而名，弗為，而成。

Chapter 48 第四十八章**Line 1**

為學日益，為道日損，損之又損，以至於無⁴¹¹為，無為，而無不為。

[For] study daily increase, [for] Dào daily decrease, decrease [and] decrease until arriving at non-action, non-action, so nothing [is] not done.^{412 413}

MWD

為學者日益，聞道日云⁴¹⁴，云之有云，以至於無⁴¹⁵，##，####。

Line 2

取天下常以無事，及其有事⁴¹⁶，不足以取天下。

[In] managing [everything that is] underneath [the] sky, [make it the] constant (the norm) to not [have any] affairs, [to have] affairs is [to be] lacking [in] managing everything underneath [the] sky.

MWD

取天下也恆#無事，及亓有事也，#足以取天#。

Chapter 49 第四十九章**Line 1**

聖人無常心，以百姓心為心。

[The] sage [does] not [have a] constant heart, [he takes the] heart [of the] hundred surnames to be [his own] heart⁴¹⁷.

MWD

#人恆無心，以百姓⁴¹⁸心為心。

Line 2

善者，吾善之，不善者，吾亦善之，德善。

Good [people], I [am] good [to], not good [people], I [am] also good [to], [this is the] quiescence [of] goodness.

⁴¹⁰ This type of yin-yang sentence style is common throughout the *Dàodéjīng*. One such example is: chapter 39, line 5: therefore, [to have] lots [of] praise [is to have] no praise.

⁴¹¹ In the Guōdiàn, wú 無 is wáng 亡.

⁴¹² See chapter 37, line 1, for the exact same words: non-action, so nothing [is] not done.

⁴¹³ For a discussion on the concept of return, see Appendix 1, pg. 166.

⁴¹⁴ In the Guōdiàn, yún 云 (say or speak) is sǔn 損 (decrease).

⁴¹⁵ In some MWD version B, wú 无 is sometimes wú 無.

⁴¹⁶ The character shì 事 can also mean “matters” or “business,” so a direct translation of wúshì 無事 could also be “no business,” and yǒushì 有事 could be “to have business.” In the context of this sentence and the *Dàodéjīng* as a whole, shì could also be taken to mean “interfere.”

⁴¹⁷ In ancient Chinese, the words for heart and mind are interchangeable.

⁴¹⁸ In the MWD version B, xìng 姓 (surnames) is xīng 省 (inspect or examine, it can also be used in xīngqīn 省親, which means “to visit one’s parents”).

MWD

善者，#善之，不善者，#亦善#，##也。

Line 3

信者，吾信之，不信者，吾亦信之，德信。

Trustful [people], I trust, untrustworthy [people], I also trust, [this is the] quiescence [of] trustfulness.

MWD

信者，#信之，不信者，#亦信之，德信也。

Line 4

聖人在天下，歙歙⁴¹⁹為天下渾⁴²⁰其心，百姓皆注其耳目聖人皆孩之。

[The] sage [is] underneath [the] sky (in the world of men), [he] breathes in, [so as to] mix his heart [with everything that is] underneath [the] sky. [The] hundred surnames all pay attention [to] their ears and eyes, [and because of this, they are] all [like the] sage's children.⁴²¹

MWD

聖人在天下也，歙歙焉，為天下渾#心，百姓皆注元屬⁴²²耳目焉，聖人皆孩⁴²³之。

Chapter 50 第五十章**Line 1**

出生入死，生之徒⁴²⁴，十有三，死之徒，十有三，人之生，動之死地，亦十有三。

[To be] born [is to] enter death. One third [of people] follow life, one third [of people] follow death [and] also one third [of] people [with] life, are moving [to a] place of death.

MWD

#生入死，生之#，#有#，#之徒，十有⁴²⁵三，而民生生動⁴²⁶皆之死地，之十有三。
... and the people's life (survival) [of] life [are] all moving [to a] place [of] death.

Line 2

夫，何故。以其生生之厚。

Now, why is this? [Because to seek the] life (survival) [of] life [is too] excessive.⁴²⁷

MWD

夫，何故也。以元生生##也。

Line 3

蓋聞善攝⁴²⁸生者，陸⁴²⁹行不遇兕虎，入軍不被甲兵。

⁴¹⁹ The characters xīxī 歙歙 mean "to breathe in." It seems though, that Lǎozǐ is using this as a metaphor for restraint.

⁴²⁰ The character hún 渾 as a standalone character, normally means "to mix" or "muddy." It could also be taken to come from húnǚ 渾樸, which means simple and natural.

⁴²¹ This line talks about how people are caught up only in their senses, whereby they do not act naturally (causing much trouble). The sage sees and treats them like children.

⁴²² In the MWD version A, zhǔ 屬 (to fix one's attention on) is added here.

⁴²³ See n.196.

⁴²⁴ The character tú 徒 could also be translated as "belong [to]."

⁴²⁵ In the MWD version B, yǒu 有 is yòu 又.

⁴²⁶ In the MWD version B, dòng 動 (move) is tóng 僮 (an alternate form of dòng)

⁴²⁷ Here, the character shēng 生 is doubled up. I have taken the first shēng to derive from qíushēng 求生, which means "to seek survival," and the second shēng to mean "life."

⁴²⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, shè 攝 (absorb or assimilate) is zhí 執 (to hold or grasp).

⁴²⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, lù 陸 (land or land route) is líng 陵 (hill or mound).

⁴³⁰ In the MWD version B, yù 遇 (chance upon) is bì 辟 (avoid).

⁴³¹ In the MWD version A, sì 兕 (female rhinoceros) is shī 失 (arrow). The character sì has two possible meanings; firstly,

[I have] heard, [to be] good at conserving [one's] life [is to] travel [by] land [and] not chance [upon] female rhinoceroses or tigers [and] to enter [the] army [and not] wear armour.

MWD

蓋聞善執生者，陵行不遇⁴³⁰兕⁴³¹虎，入軍不被甲兵。

Line 4

兕無所投其角，虎無所措其爪⁴³²，兵無所容其刃。夫，何故。以其無死地。

[For these people], female rhinoceroses [do] not [have a place to] throw (stick) their horns, tigers [do] not [have a place to] use their claws [and] soldiers [do] not [have a place to] stab their swords. Now, why is this? Because [they have] no place of death.

MWD

革兕無所投元角，虎無所措⁴³³元蚤，兵無所容##。#，何故也。以元無死地。

Chapter 51 第五十一章

Line 1

道生之，德畜之，物形⁴³⁴之，勢⁴³⁵成之。

[The] Dào produces, quiescence raises, things [have] form [and] circumstances complete.

MWD

道生之，而德畜之，物刑之，而器成之。

Line 2

是以，萬物莫不尊道，而貴德。

So, none [of the] ten thousand things [do] not respect [the] Dào and value quiescence.

MWD

是以，萬物##尊道，而貴德。

Line 3

道之尊，德之貴。夫，莫之命⁴³⁶，而常自然。

[The] respect [of] Dào [and] the value [of] quiescence. Now, none [of these things are ever] commanded [to do] and [are instead] constantly natural.

MWD

道之尊也，德之貴也。夫，莫之爵也，而恆自然⁴³⁷也。

Line 4

故，道生之，德畜之，長之，育之，亭⁴³⁸之，毒⁴³⁹之，養之，覆⁴⁴⁰之。

Therefore, [the] Dào [produces] life, quiescence raises⁴⁴¹, grows, nurtures, shelters, toughens, nourishes [and]

it may mean a kind of bovine-like animal/s and secondly, it may mean a female rhinoceros.

⁴³² In the MWD versions A and B, zhǎo 爪 (claw) is zǎo 蚤 (flea).

⁴³³ In the MWD version A, (manage, arrange, handle) cuò 措 is xī 昔 (former time or in the past).

⁴³⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, xíng 形 (shape) is xíng 刑 (punishment).

⁴³⁵ The character shì 勢 can mean “strength” but in this case seems to mean “circumstances.” In the MWD versions A and B, it is qì 器 (an implement).

⁴³⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, mìng 命 (life, fate or command) is jué 爵 (rank or title).

⁴³⁷ In the MWD version A, rán 然 is jì 祭.

⁴³⁸ The character tíng 亭 means “erect,” which makes no sense in this sentence till it changed to mean “shelter.”

⁴³⁹ This character, dú 毒 means “toxins” but can be changed to “toughen,” another example of a lack of vocabulary.

⁴⁴⁰ This character fù 覆 means “to cover” but in the context of this sentence, “protect” makes more sense. In the MWD version B, this character is fù 復 (return).

⁴⁴¹ “Raise,” as in raising children.

protects.

MWD

＃，道生之，＃畜之，長之，育⁴⁴²之，亭之，毒之，养之，覆之。

Line 5

生而，不有，為，而不恃，長，而不宰，是謂玄德。

Produce, yet not [to] have, [to] act, yet not depend [on], [to] grow, yet not [to] slaughter. [This] is called profound quiescence.

MWD

##，弗有也，為，而弗恃也，長，而弗宰也，此是胃玄德。

Chapter 52 第五十二章

Line 1

天下有始，以為天下母。

[Everything that is] underneath [the] sky has [a] beginning [and this beginning] is [the] mother [of everything that is] underneath [the] sky.⁴⁴³

MWD

天下有始，以為天下母。

Line 2

既得⁴⁴⁴其母，以知其子，既知其子，復守其母，沒身不殆。

Having known the mother is [to] know [the] child, [having] known the child [is to] again abide [by] its mother, [to abide by the mother till the] end [and the] body [has] no danger.⁴⁴⁵

MWD

既得元母，以知元子，既知其子，復守其母，沒身不殆。

Line 3

塞其兌，閉其門⁴⁴⁶，終身不勤⁴⁴⁷。開⁴⁴⁸其兌，濟其事，終身不救。

Block the holes (apertures) [and] close the doors, [so in the] end [the] body [is] not exhausted. Opening the holes, assisting [with] affairs [and in the] end [the] body [can]not [be] rescued.

MWD

塞元兌⁴⁴⁹，閉元門⁴⁵⁰，終⁴⁵¹身不董。啟元悶，濟⁴⁵²元事，終身不救⁴⁵³。

⁴⁴² In the MWD version A, yù 育 (give birth or raise) is suì 遂 (satisfy or fulfil).

⁴⁴³ See chapter 1, line 2 for a similar line.

⁴⁴⁴ The characters jìdé 既得 can also be translated as “having vested in.”

⁴⁴⁵ This could be translated indirectly as “to have no dangers till the end of your life.”

⁴⁴⁶ See chapter 56, line 2 for the same six characters: block [the] holes [and] close the doors.

⁴⁴⁷ See n.73.

⁴⁴⁸ In MWD versions A and B, and the Guōdiàn, kāi 開 (open) is qǐ 啟 (open).

⁴⁴⁹ In the MWD version A, duì 兌 (hole or exchanges) is mèn 悶 (bored, depressed, stuffy), and in the Guōdiàn, it is mén 門 (entrance or door).

⁴⁵⁰ See chapter 56, line 2 for the same six characters: block [the] holes (apertures), close the doors. In the MWD version A, mén 門 is mèn 悶.

⁴⁵¹ In the MWD version B and the Guōdiàn, zhōng 終 (end) is dōng 冬 (this can mean “winter”) or is an alternate form of dōng 咚 which means “bang” or “thud.”

⁴⁵² In the MWD version B, jì 濟 (cross a river or help) is qí 齊 (be level with, even or identical).

⁴⁵³ In the MWD version B, jiù 救 (rescue) is jí 棘 (brambles or thorns).

Line 4

見小曰明，守柔曰強。

Seeing [the] small [is] called bright, abiding [by the] soft⁴⁵⁴ [is] called strong.

MWD

見小曰明，守柔曰強。

Line 5

用其光，復歸其明，無遺身殃⁴⁵⁵，是為習常。

Use the light [and] again return [to] the bright, [do] not bequeath [your] body [to] calamities, this is [called] practising [the] constant.

MWD

用元光，復歸元明，毋遺⁴⁵⁶身央，是習⁴⁵⁷常。

Chapter 53 第五十三章**Line 1**

使⁴⁵⁸我介然⁴⁵⁹有知，行於大道，唯施是畏。

[If] I [were to] make [use of a] little [bit of] knowledge [that I] have, [it would be] to walk [with the] great Dào [and] only fear [going] astray.

MWD

使我介潔有知也，行於大道，唯施是畏。

Line 2

大道甚夷，而人好徑。

[The] great Dào [is] very smooth, yet people[are] very [fond of other] paths.

MWD

大道甚夷，民甚解好徑。

Line 3

朝甚⁴⁶⁰除，田甚蕪，倉甚虛，服文綵⁴⁶¹，帶利劍，壓飲食，財貨有餘是謂盜夸。非道也哉。

[The] royal court [is] completely wiped out, [the] fields [are] completely overgrown with weeds, [the] granaries [are] completely empty, wearing embroidered colours (fancy clothes), carrying sharp swords, sated [with] food [and] drink, [to have a] surplus [of] wealth [and] possessions, [this] is called [the] boasting [of a] thief. [This is] not [the] Dào!

MWD

朝甚除，田甚蕪，倉甚虛，服文采，帶利劍，壓飲食，而齋財貨####盜#。非#也#。

⁴⁵⁴ The character róu 柔 (soft) is commonly used throughout the *Dàodéjīng* see Appendix 1, pg. 165 for further details.

⁴⁵⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, yāng 殃 (calamity or disaster) is yāng 央 (beg or entreat).

⁴⁵⁶ In the MWD version A, guì 貴 (value) is Dào 道.

⁴⁵⁷ In the MWD version A, xí 習 (practise) is xí 襲 (attack or inherit).

⁴⁵⁸ The character shǐ 使 has many meanings in Chinese but in this case, it seems to mean “to use” or “to employ.”

⁴⁵⁹ The character rán 然 is used as a conjunction in this sentence; any translation is omitted. The character rán can have many meanings but can commonly be translated as “so.” I commonly omit any translation. In the MWD version A, this character is jié 潔 (clean).

⁴⁶⁰ The character shén 甚 means “very” or “extremely,” shén is translated here as “completely.”

⁴⁶¹ In the MWD versions A and B, cǎi 綵 (bright colour) is cǎi 采 (colour).

Chapter 54 第五十四章

Line 1

善建者，不拔，善抱⁴⁶²者，不脫⁴⁶³，子孫以祭祀不輟。

[A] good establishment [can] not [be] uprooted, [a] good embrace [can] not slip [away], sons [and] grandsons [give] sacrificial offerings without stopping.

MWD

善建者，不拔⁴⁶⁴，###，##，子孫以祭祀不輟⁴⁶⁵。

Line 2

修之於身，其德乃真，修之於家，其德乃餘，修之於鄉，其德乃長，修之於國，其德乃豐，修之於天下，其德乃普。

Cultivating [the] body⁴⁶⁶ [and] quiescence [is] therefore real, cultivate [at] home [and] quiescence therefore [has] surplus, cultivate [in] the village [and] quiescence therefore [has] growth, cultivate [in] the state [and] quiescence [is] therefore is plentiful, cultivate [in everything] underneath [the] sky [and] quiescence [is] therefore everywhere.

MWD

修⁴⁶⁷之#身，元⁴⁶⁸德乃真⁴⁶⁹，修之#家，元德乃餘，修之#鄉，元德乃長，修之#國，元德乃豐⁴⁷⁰，修之#天下，元德乃普⁴⁷¹。

Line 3

故，以身觀身，以家觀家，以鄉觀鄉，以國觀國，以天下觀天下。

Therefore, [the] body observes [the] body, [the] home observes [the] home, [the] village observes [the] village, [the] state observes [the] state [and everything that is] underneath [the] sky observes [everything that is] underneath [the] sky.⁴⁷²

MWD

#，以身觀身，以家觀家，以鄉觀鄉，以國⁴⁷³觀國，以天下觀天下。

Line 4

吾何以知天下然哉。以此。

How [do] I know [that everything] underneath [the] sky [is] so? [It is] because [of] this.⁴⁷⁴

MWD

吾何#知⁴⁷⁵天下之然茲。以此。

⁴⁶² In the Guōdiàn, bào 抱 (to hold or carry in the arms) is bǎo 保 (protect, defend or keep).

⁴⁶³ In the Guōdiàn, tuō 脫 (to shed or come off) is duì 兌 (to exchange or convert).

⁴⁶⁴ In the MWD version A, bá 拔 (pull out) is bō 撥 (to move or adjust with the hand).

⁴⁶⁵ In the MWD version B, chuò 輟 (stop or cease) is jué 絕 (cut short, extinct or vanish).

⁴⁶⁶ Many times throughout the *Dàodéjīng*, the body is used in a way that it is referring to the self.

⁴⁶⁷ In the MWD version B, xiū 修 (repair or cultivate) is xiū 脩 (repair or mend), and in the Guōdiàn it is yōu 攸 (distant).

⁴⁶⁸ In the Guōdiàn, qí 元 (his, her, its, their) is qí 兀 (his, her, its, their).

⁴⁶⁹ In the Guōdiàn, zhēn 真 (true or real) is zhēn 貞 (loyal or faithful).

⁴⁷⁰ In the MWD version B, fēng 豐 (rich, abundant, plentiful) is féng 逢 (to meet or to butt; as in horned animals).

⁴⁷¹ In the MWD version B, pǔ 普 (general or universal) is bó 博 (rich, abundant, plentiful or ample).

⁴⁷² This sentence implies a type of self-governing or self-organisation.

⁴⁷³ In MWD version A and the Guōdiàn, guó 國 (state) is bāng 邦 (state).

⁴⁷⁴ In this chapter, Lǎozǐ gives a method for keeping a state in order, which begins from the bottom up, and starts with a good foundation (on an individual level).

⁴⁷⁵ In the Guōdiàn zhī 知 (to know) is zhì 智 (wisdom).

Chapter 55 第五十五章**Line 1**

含德之厚，比於赤子。

Hold [onto] the fullness [of] quiescence [as it is] comparable [to] a newborn baby.⁴⁷⁶

MWD

含德之厚者，比於赤子。

Line 2

蜂虿⁴⁷⁷虺蛇不螫，猛獸不据，攫鳥不搏。

Wasps, scorpions [and] snakes [will] not sting [or bite them], fierce animals [will] not seize [them and] birds of prey [will] not strike [them].

MWD

蜂⁴⁷⁸虿⁴⁷⁹虺⁴⁸⁰蛇⁴⁸¹弗螫⁴⁸²，攫⁴⁸²鳥猛獸弗搏⁴⁸³。

Line 3

骨弱筋柔，而握固。

[Their] bones [are] weak, [their] tendons [are] soft but [their] grasp [is] firm.

MWD

骨弱⁴⁸⁴筋⁴⁸⁵柔，而握固。

Line 4

未知牝牡之合，而全⁴⁸⁶作，精⁴⁸⁷之至也。

Not knowing [the] joining [of] male [and] female but [still having an] intact (penis) [that] works, [his] sexual essence [is at its] most (peak).

MWD

未知牝牡之合⁴⁸⁸，而媵怒⁴⁸⁹，精之至也。

Not knowing [the] joining [of] male [and] female but [still having a] roused penis, [his] sexual essence [is at its] most (peak).

Line 5

终日号，而不嗄⁴⁹⁰，和之至也。知和曰常，知常曰明，益生曰祥，心使气曰强。

Crying [the] whole day, yet [he does] not [get a] hoarse voice, [the] most (peak) harmony. [To] know [this]

⁴⁷⁶ For a better understanding, this could be indirectly translated as, “he who fully embodies quiescence is like a newborn infant.”

⁴⁷⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, chài 蠚 (a general name for venomous snakes, scorpions, etc or a variety of scorpion) is lì 癘 (pestilence or plague).

⁴⁷⁸ In the MWD version A, fēng 蜂 (honey bee) is féng 逢 (meet or come upon).

⁴⁷⁹ In the MWD version B, huǐ 虺 (a kind of poisonous snake) is chóng 虫 (insect).

⁴⁸⁰ In the MWD version A, shé 蛇 (snake) is dì 地 (earth or land or soil), and in the Guōdiàn it is tā 它 (it).

⁴⁸¹ In the MWD version B, shì 螫 (sting) is hè 赫 (to be frightened).

⁴⁸² In the MWD version B, jué 攫 (seize or grab) is jù 據 (occupy or seize).

⁴⁸³ In the MWD version B, bó 搏 (seize or fight) is bǔ 捕 (catch, seize or arrest), and in the Guōdiàn it is kòu 扣 (to arrest or to confiscate).

⁴⁸⁴ In the MWD version B, ruò 弱 (weak) is jīn 筋 (tendon).

⁴⁸⁵ In the MWD version B, jīn 筋 (tendon) is ruò 弱 (weak).

⁴⁸⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, quán 全 (complete or intact) is zuī 媵 (penis).

⁴⁸⁷ The character jīng 精 commonly means “essence” but can also mean “sperm.”

⁴⁸⁸ In the MWD version B, hé 合 (join) is huì 會 (meeting).

⁴⁸⁹ Classically, nù 怒 (anger) can mean “to rouse oneself.”

⁴⁹⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, shà 嗄 (hoarse voice) is yōu 嚶 (this character is most likely an archaic version of shà).

harmony [is] called [the] constant. [To] know [the] constant [is] called bright⁴⁹¹, [to] increase life⁴⁹² [is] called inauspicious, [when the] heart uses energy,⁴⁹³ [this is] called strength.

MWD

終⁴⁹⁴日号，而不_嘯，和之至也。#和曰常，知常⁴⁹⁵曰明，益生曰祥，心使气曰强。

Line 6

物壯則老謂之不道，不道早已。

[When] things [are] robust, [they] are old⁴⁹⁶, [this is] not called [the] Dào, [with] no Dào [there is an] early end (death).

MWD

物#則⁴⁹⁷老_胃之不道，不道早⁴⁹⁸已。

Chapter 56 第五十六章

Line 1

知者，不言，言者，不知。

[Those that] know [do] not speak, [those that] speak [do] not know.

MWD

知者，_弗言，言者，_弗知。

Line 2

塞其兌，閉其門⁴⁹⁹，挫其銳，解其紛，和其光，同其塵，是謂玄同。

Block the holes (apertures), close the doors, blunt the sharp, untie the tangled, harmonise the bright, [be the] same [as] dust,⁵⁰⁰ [this] is called [to be the] same [as the] profound.⁵⁰¹

MWD

塞_兌兌⁵⁰²，閉_元門，和_元光，同_元塵，_挫兌⁵⁰³，而解_元紛，是_胃玄同。

Line 3

故，不可得，而親，不可得，而疏，不可得，而利，不可得，而害，不可得，而貴，不可得，而賤。

Therefore, [with this person, one] cannot have either closeness, [one] cannot have either distance, [one] cannot have either benefit, [one] cannot have either harm, [one] cannot have either value [and one] cannot have either humiliation.

⁴⁹¹ See chapter 16, line 2, for a similar line: [a] return [to] life [is] called [the] constant, [to the] know [the] constant [is] called brightness.

⁴⁹² To increase life most probably means to interfere with life.

⁴⁹³ The heart uses qì, which most likely refers to the use of desires or aspirations.

⁴⁹⁴ In the MWD version B and the Guōdiàn, zhōng 終 (end) is dōng 冬 (this can mean “winter,” or is an alternate form of dōng 咚 which means “bang” or “thud”).

⁴⁹⁵ In the MWD version A cháng 常 (constant) is hé 和 (harmony).

⁴⁹⁶ Here, the theme of knowing when to stop and no excesses can be observed again.

⁴⁹⁷ In the MWD version A, zé 則 (grammar word) is jí 即 (namely).

⁴⁹⁸ In the MWD version B, zǎo 早 (early) is zǎo 蚤 (nowadays this means “flea,” but in this context clearly means early).

⁴⁹⁹ See chapter 52, line 3, for the same six characters.

⁵⁰⁰ Chapter 4, line 3 says: [it] subdues the sharp, unties the entangled, harmonises the bright [and is the] same [as] the dust.

⁵⁰¹ The line with this theme is repeated in chapter 77, line 2: the sky’s Dào [is to] reduce [what] has surplus and [to] supplement [that which is] deficient. This conveys to the reader that xún 玄 or profound is another name for the Dào.

⁵⁰² In the MWD version A, duì 兌 (exchange) is mèn 悶 (bored or depressed but probably means “door” here).

⁵⁰³ In the MWD version A, these three characters are: zuò 坐 (sit) qí 齊 (it) yuè 閱 (read, go over or pursue).

MWD

故⁵⁰⁴，不可得，而⁵⁰⁵親也，亦不可得，而疏，不可得，而利，亦不可得，而害，不可得，而貴，亦不可得，而賤⁵⁰⁶。

Line 4

故，為天下貴。

Therefore, in [everything that is] underneath [the] sky [this person] is valued.

MWD

故，為天下貴。

Chapter 57 第五十七章**Line 1**

以正治國，以奇⁵⁰⁷ 508用兵，以無事取天下。

Be upright [in] managing [the] state, use [the] army [as something] strange [to do and with] non-interference take [everything that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD

以正之國⁵⁰⁹，以畸用兵，以無⁵¹⁰事取天下。

Line 2

吾何以知其然哉。以此⁵¹¹，天下多忌諱，而民彌貧，民多利器，國家滋昏，人多伎巧，奇物滋起，法令滋彰，盜賊多有。

How [do] I know this [is] so? [It is] because [of] this: [when everything that is] underneath [the] sky [has] lots [of] taboos (prohibitions), [the] poorer [the] people, [when the] people [have] lots [of] sharp implements, [the] state [and] royal house [are] increasingly [in] darkness, [when the] people [are] very crafty, strange things increasingly arise, [when the] command [of] laws [are] increasingly clever (rigid), [the] more bandits [and] thieves [there will be].⁵¹²

MWD

吾何以知元然也哉⁵¹³。##⁵¹⁴，夫，天下多忌諱，而民彌貧，民多利器，而邦家滋⁵¹⁵昏，人多知#，而何物滋#，#物滋章，盜賊##。

⁵⁰⁴ In the Guōdiàn gù 故 (therefore) is gǔ 古 (ancient; in this case, it is an alternate form of gù). This character is used this way throughout the Guōdiàn.

⁵⁰⁵ In the Guōdiàn, ér 而 (and, yet) is tiān 天 (sky).

⁵⁰⁶ In the MWD version A, jiàn 賤 (cheap) is qiǎn 淺 (shallow).

⁵⁰⁷ The character qí 奇 could either mean qíguài 奇怪 (strange or odd) or qíqiǎo 奇巧 (ingenious). As Lǎozǐ does not like the use of armies or soldiers I have chosen this to mean “strange.” For Lǎozǐ’s dislike of soldiers, see Chapter 30, line 1: [when] the Dào assists [the] ruler [of] men, soldiers [will] not use force [on all that is] underneath [the] sky. These affairs [are] easy [at] coming back. Chapter 31, line 2: a man of noble character, [his] residence will value [the] left, [one who] uses soldiers will value [the] right. Chapter 69, line 1: [in] using soldiers [there are the following] sayings: “I dare not [be] the host, only the guest, [I] dare not advance [an] inch, only retreat [a] foot.”

⁵⁰⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, qí 奇 (strange) is jī 畸 (lopsided or unbalanced).

⁵⁰⁹ See n.181.

⁵¹⁰ The Guōdiàn, wú 無 (no or not) is wáng 亡 (to die or flee, in this case it means no or not) and in the MWD version A, it is qí 其 (it, his, her, their, it also seems to have the meaning of no in the MWD).

⁵¹¹ The characters yǐcǐ 以此 are always translated as: [it is] because [of] this.

⁵¹² See chapter 19, line 3: terminate skilfulness (cunning) [and] abandon profit, [then there will be] no bandits [and] thieves.

⁵¹³ In the MWD version B, zāi 哉 (exclamation) is cái 才 (emphasizes the preceding word).

⁵¹⁴ The characters of yǐcǐ 以此 are not used in the MWD versions.

⁵¹⁵ In the MWD version A, zī 滋 (grow or increase) is cí 茲 (now, in this case, is an alternative form of zī).

Line 3

故，聖人云，我⁵¹⁶無為，而民自化，我好⁵¹⁷靜，而民自正，我無事，而民自富，我無欲，而民自樸。
Therefore, the sage says: “I [have] non-action, so [the] people [them] selves transform,⁵¹⁸ I [am] very still, so [the] people [them] selves [are] upright, I [do] not [have any] business,⁵¹⁹ so [the] people [them] selves [are] natural], I [have] no desire, so [the] people [are them] selves simple.”

MWD

是以，人言之，曰，我丌為⁵²⁰也，而民自化，我好靜，而民自正，我丌事，而民自富，我欲不欲，而民自樸。

Chapter 58 第五十八章**Line 1**

其政悶悶，其民淳淳，其政察察，其民缺缺。
[When] the government [is] depressed (not interfering), its people [are] pure [and] honest, [when] the government [is] inquiring [about everything], its people [are] lacking.

MWD

丌正悶悶，丌民屯屯⁵²¹，丌正察察，丌邦缺缺。
[When] governing [has] pity, their people [are] simple, [when] governing [is] inquiring (about everything), the state is lacking.

Line 2

禍兮，福⁵²²之所倚，福兮，禍之所伏。孰知其極。
Disaster! [What] happiness relies on. Happiness! [What] disasters conceal. Who knows the limit.

MWD

禍[#]，福之所倚，福兮，禍之所伏。孰知丌極。

Line 3

其無正。正復為奇，善復為妖。
[When there] is no uprightness, uprightness [once] again is strange [and the] good [once] again are evil.

MWD

#無正也。正為奇，善復為[#]。

Line 4

人之迷⁵²³，其日固久。是以，聖人方，而不割，廉⁵²⁴，而不剝，直，而不肆，光，而不耀。

⁵¹⁶ Classical Chinese uses two versions of “I” in writing. “I” as in referring to the self: wú 吾 and “I” as it is used in this line, as a general statement: wǒ 我

⁵¹⁷ In spoken Chinese, when the character for “good,” 好 is added in a sentence like, 我好累 (I good tired), it means, I [am] very tired.

⁵¹⁸ See chapter 37, line 1, for a similar line: [the] constant Dào [is] non-action, so nothing [is] not done. [If] feudal lords [and] kings [are] able to abide [by it, then] ten thousand things will [them]selves transform.

⁵¹⁹ The character shì 事 can be translated as “affairs,” “matters,” or “business.” In the context of *Lǎozǐ* though, when the character wú 無 is added in front of shì, it probably means “no interference.”

⁵²⁰ In the Guōdiàn, wúwéi 無為 (non-action) is wúshì 無事 (no affairs) and in the MWD versions A and B, it is qíwéi 丌為 (non-action). The character for qí normally means “his,” “her,” “it,” or “theirs.” In this case it must mean “no.” Some versions of the MWD do not use qí and instead use wú.

⁵²¹ In this case tún or zhūn 屯 is taken as a variant of chún 純 (simple).

⁵²² The character fú 福 can have several meanings: “luck,” “happiness” or “good fortune.” “Happiness” seems to be the best fit in this line.

⁵²³ In the MWD version B, mí 迷 (confused) is xī 悉 (in all cases or to know).

⁵²⁴ The character lián 廉 is an old Chinese word used for the side wall of a Chinese house but can also mean “honest”. In MWD version B, it is jiān 兼 (double, twice or simultaneous).

[The] confusion [of the] people, these days [are] undoubtedly [long]. So, the sage [is] square but not cutting, angular but [does] not injure, straight but not unrestrained, bright but not dazzling.⁵²⁵

MWD

之迷也，元日固久矣。是以，##方，而不割，廉，而不斲⁵²⁶，直，而不肆⁵²⁷，光，而不耀⁵²⁸。

Chapter 59 第五十九章

Line 1

治人事天，莫若嗇。

[In] governing [the] people [and] dealing [with the] sky, [there is] nothing like [being] thrifty.

MWD

治人事天，莫若嗇。

Line 2

夫唯，嗇是謂早服，早服謂之，重積德，重積德則無不克，無不克則莫知其極，莫知其極，可以有國，有國之母，可以長久。

Now, only thrifty is called early preparation, early preparation [is] called heavily accumulated quiescence. [To have] heavily accumulated quiescence [and there] is nothing [a person] [can]not overcome. [Having] nothing [that can]not be overcome [and there] is no known limit [to this person]. [Having] no known limit [and this person] can have (rule) [the] state. Having the mother [of the] state [and one] can long endure.⁵²⁹

MWD

夫唯，嗇是以早⁵³⁰服，#服是胃重積#，#####，#####，莫#元#，可以有國，有國之母，可#長久。⁵³¹

Line 3

是謂根深固柢⁵³²，長生久視之道。

So, [this is] called deep roots [and a] firm base, [which is] the Dào's [way to] live long [and to] see [the world a] long time.

MWD

是胃根⁵³³深固氏，長生久視之道也。

Chapter 60 第六十章

Line 1

治大國，若烹⁵³⁴小鮮，以道蒞⁵³⁵天下，其鬼不神。

Governing [a] large state [is] like cooking [a] small fish, [use the] Dào [to] administrate [everything that is]

⁵²⁵ Here once again is another line of the same theme of knowing when enough is enough, zhǐzhǐ 知止 or having no excess. This theme is repeated again and again throughout the *Dàodéjīng*.

⁵²⁶ In the MWD version B, guì 斲 (stab or cut) is cì 刺 (thorn, splinter or to stab).

⁵²⁷ In the MWD version B, sì 肆 (act recklessly or unrestrained) is xiè 紕 (to tie or to bind).

⁵²⁸ In the MWD version B, yào 耀 (brilliant or glorious) is tiào 眺 (look into the distance from a height).

⁵²⁹ Chapter 44, line 3, Lǎozǐ also gives another method to “long endure”: know [what is] sufficient [in order to have] no disgrace, know [when to] stop [in order to have] no danger, [only then one] can long endure. These last few words are commonly translated as: “the way to long life and enduring (or lasting) vision.” I have chosen not to go with such a translation, as it seems one needs to be very careful in taking modern ideas, philosophies and mindsets, and assuming this is the way someone thought 2300 years ago. The ancient human mindset is commonly completely different from the modern one.

⁵³⁰ In the MWD version B, zǎo 早 (early) is zǎo 蚤 (nowadays this means “flea” but in this context clearly means early).

⁵³¹ In some versions of MWD B, the end of this line reads: 重#####莫知其#，莫知其###有國，有國之母，可##久。

⁵³² In the MWD versions A and B, dǐ 底 (bottom or base) is shì 氏 (family or clan).

⁵³³ In the MWD version A, gēn 根 (root) is jīn 槿 (hibiscus syriacus).

⁵³⁴ In the MWD version B, pēng 烹 (cook) is xiǎng 亨 (enjoy).

⁵³⁵ In the MWD version B, lì 蒞 (arrive, be present) is lì 立 (to stand).

underneath [the] sky, [then] ghosts [do] not [have a] spirit.

MWD

治大國，若烹小鮮，以道蒞天下，元鬼不神。

Line 2

非其鬼不神，其神不傷人。

[It is] not [that] these ghosts [do not really have] no spirit, it [is that their] spirit [can]not harm people.

MWD

非元鬼不神也，元神不傷人也。

Line 3

非其神不傷人，聖人亦不傷人。

[It is] not [that] these spirits [do] not harm people, [it is that the] sage also [does] not harm people.

MWD

非元神不傷人也，聖人亦弗傷人也。

Line 4

夫，兩不相傷，故，德交⁵³⁶歸焉。

Now, [because these] two [do] not mutually harm [the people], therefore, quiescence converges [and makes a] return.

MWD

夫，兩不相傷，故，德交歸焉。

Chapter 61 第六十一章

Line 1

大國者，下流，天下之交，天下之牝。

[A] large state [is] downstream [where all the rivers] under [the] sky converge [and is the] female [of] [everything that is] underneath [the] sky.⁵³⁷

MWD

大國⁵³⁸者也，下流，天下之牝也，天下之交⁵³⁹也。

Line 2

牝常以靜勝牡，以靜為下。

[A] female constantly can [with] stillness defeat [the] male, [this is because] stillness is below.

MWD

牝恆以靜⁵⁴⁰勝⁵⁴¹牡，為元靜也，故，宜為下也。

⁵³⁶ In regard to the character jiāo 交, the general meaning of jiāo could be understood as; when two things intersect, converge or mix. One use of the word in spoken Chinese is: [to] make friends, 交朋友. In this case, the translation of jiao could also be “make.” This line could be understood as, “when the sage and ghosts do not harm the people, the people can go back to natural living.”

⁵³⁷ See chapter 6, lines 1 and 2: [the] valley spirit [does] not die, [it] is called [the] profound female. [The] gate [of the] profound female is called [the] root [of the] sky [and the] earth.

⁵³⁸ In the MWD version A and the Guōdiàn, guó 國 (state) is bāng 邦 (state).

⁵³⁹ In the MWD version A, jiāo 交 (mix or connect) is jiāo 郊 (suburbs or outskirts).

⁵⁴⁰ In MWD version A, jìng 靜 (stillness) is jìng 靚 (alternate form of jìng).

⁵⁴¹ In the MWD version B, shèng 勝 (win) is zhèn 朕 (I the sovereign).

Line 3

故，大國以下小國則取小國，小國以下大國則取大國。故，或下以取，或下，而取。

Therefore, [a] large state can lie below [a] small state, thereby taking [the] small state, [a] small state can [lie] below [a] large state, thereby taking [the] large state. Therefore, either [by] low [lying a state] can take [over] or [by] low [lying a state] then takes.

MWD

故，大國以下小國則取小國，小國以下大國則取大國。故，或下以取，或下，而取。

Line 4

大國不過欲兼畜人，小國不過欲入事人。

[A] large state merely desires [to] unite [and] raise⁵⁴²[the] people, [a] small state merely desires [to] enter [into] the affairs [of] people.

MWD

故，大國不過欲兼⁵⁴³畜人，小國不過欲入事人。

Line 5:

夫，兩者，各得所欲，大者，宜為下。

Now, [the] two each get [what they] so desire, [the] big [state] appropriately is below.

MWD

夫，##，皆得_元欲則大者，宜為下。

Chapter 62 第六十二章**Line 1**

道者，萬物之奧⁵⁴⁴，善人之寶⁵⁴⁵，不善人之所保。

[The] Dào [is the] abstruse [mystery of] ten thousand things, [it is the] good person's treasure [and is what] preserves [the] not good person.

MWD

道者，萬物之_注也，善人之_保也，不善人之所保⁵⁴⁶也。

Line 2

美言可以市，尊行可以加人。

Beautiful words can [be] traded, respectful conduct can increase [a] person.

MWD

美言可以市，尊行可以加⁵⁴⁷人。

Line 3

人之不善，何弃之有。故，立天子，置三公，雖有拱⁵⁴⁸璧以先駟⁵⁴⁹馬，不如⁵⁵⁰坐進此道。

The people [that are] not good, why have [them] abandoned? Therefore, [when] establishing [the] son [of the] sky [and putting in] place [the] three ministers, although [a] large flat round ornament of jade with a hole at the

⁵⁴² The character xù 蓄 means to raise or rear. Interestingly, it is used specifically with livestock, as in to raise or rear livestock and therefore, could be translated as “herd.” It is unclear here if Lǎozǐ is using this as a negative.

⁵⁴³ In the MWD version B, jiān 兼 (double, simultaneously or twice) is bìng 並 (side by side or simultaneously).

⁵⁴⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, ào 奧 (profound, difficult to understand) is zhù 注 (pour into or fill).

⁵⁴⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, bǎo 寶 (treasure) is bǎo 保 (protect).

⁵⁴⁶ In the MWD version B, bǎo 保 (protect) is bǎo 葆 (preserve).

⁵⁴⁷ In the MWD version B, jiā 加 (add) is hè 賀 (to send a present).

⁵⁴⁸ In the MWD version A, gǒng 拱 (surround) is gòng 共 (common or in general).

⁵⁴⁹ In the MWD versions A and B, sì 駟 (a team of four horses) is sì 四 (4).

⁵⁵⁰ In the MWD version A, rú 如 (as if or such as) is shàn 善 (good), and in the MWD version B, it is rùo 若 (as if or like).

centre [is] given before [the] four chariot horses, [it is] not like sitting [down and] moving towards (or kneeling down and presenting) the Dào.

MWD

人之不善也，何弃之有。故，立天子，置三卿⁵⁵¹，雖有拱璧以先四馬，不若坐而進此#。

Line 4

古之所以貴此道者，何。不曰，以求得，有罪以免邪⁵⁵²。故，為天下貴。

[Why did] the ancients so value this Dào? [One does] not say [they did it to] seek gain, [they did it to be] exempt [of] fault. Therefore, [they] are valued [by all that are] underneath [the] sky.

MWD

古之所以貴此#者，何也。不胥求以得，有罪以免輿。故，為天下貴。

Chapter 63 第六十三章

Line 1

為無為，事無事，味無味。大小多少。報怨以德。

Actions [have] no actions, affairs [have] no affairs, tastes [have] no tastes. Big [as] small, [a] lot [as a] little. Repay resentment with quiescence.⁵⁵³

MWD

為无⁵⁵⁴為，事无事，味无味⁵⁵⁵。大小多少。報怨以德。

Line 2

圖難於其易，為大於其細，天下難事，必作於易，天下大事，必作於細。

Plan [the] difficult [while] it is easy, do big [things while] they are small. Underneath [the] sky (in the world) difficult affairs must [be] done [when they] are easy, underneath [the] sky great affairs must [be] done [when they] are small.

MWD

圖難乎，###元細也，天下之難#，#作於易，天下之大#，#作於細。

Line 3

是以，聖人終不為大，故，能成其大。

So, [in the] end [the] sage never does [anything] great, therefore, [the sage is] able [to] accomplish greatness.

MWD

是以，聖人終⁵⁵⁶不為大，故，能###。

Line 4

夫，輕諾⁵⁵⁷必寡信，多易必多難。是以，聖人猶⁵⁵⁸難之，故，終無難矣。

Now, light promises must [have] little trust, [what is] especially easy must [be] especially difficult. So, [the] sage [takes things] like [they are] difficult, therefore [in the] end, nothing [is] difficult!

⁵⁵¹ In MWD version A, gōng 公 (high-ranking official) is qīng 卿 (high-ranking official), and in the MWD version B, it is xiāng 鄉, which normally means countryside but cannot have that meaning in this instance.

⁵⁵² In the MWD version A, xié 邪 (grammar word) is yú 輿 (a carriage), and in the MWD version B it is yǔ 與 (to give or offer).

⁵⁵³ “Repay resentment with quiescence” seems to be out of place here and may belong to chapter 79, line 1.

⁵⁵⁴ In the Guōdiàn, wú 无 is wáng 亡.

⁵⁵⁵ In the Guōdiàn and MWD versions A, wèi 味 (taste) is wèi 未 (not).

⁵⁵⁶ In the MWD version A, zhōng 終 (end) is dōng 冬 (this can mean “winter” or is an alternate form of dōng 咚, which means “bang” or “thud”).

⁵⁵⁷ In the MWD version B, nuò 諾 (yes) is ruò 若 (as if, like).

⁵⁵⁸ In the Guōdiàn and the MWD version A, yóu 猶 (just as or like) is yóu 猷 (plan or scheme).

MWD

夫，輕諾##信，多易必多難。是以，聖人猶難之，故，終於無難#。

Chapter 64 第六十四章**Line 1**

其安易持，其未兆易謀，其脆易泮，其微易散。

[What] is quiet [is] easy [to] maintain, [what] has not [yet] come out [is] easy [to] plan, [what] is fragile easily falls apart, [what] is faint [is] easily scattered.

MWD

元安也易持也，###易謀，####，####。

Line 2

為之於未有，治之於未亂。

Act [when there] is nothing [to] have (get), manage [when things] are not [yet a] mess.

MWD

#####。

Line 3

合抱之木，生於毫末，九層⁵⁵⁹之台，起⁵⁶⁰於累⁵⁶¹土，千⁵⁶²里⁵⁶³之行⁵⁶⁴，始於足下。

[A] tree [that can fill the] embrace [of a man's arms is] born [from] a tiny shoot, [a] platform [of] nine levels [high] starts from piling up earth, [a] journey [of a] thousand miles begins beneath [one's] feet.

MWD

###木，作於毫末，九^成之台，^作於^纍土，^百千之高，始⁵⁶⁵於足下。

Line 4

為者，敗之，執者，失之。

[To] act [is to] fail, [to] hold [is to] lose.

MWD

為^之者，敗之，執者，失之。

Line 5

是以，聖人無為，故，無敗，無執，故，無失。

So, [the] sage [uses] non-action, therefore, nothing fails, [the sage does] not hold [on], therefore, nothing loses.

MWD

是以，#人#為^也，#，#敗，#執^也，故，#失^也。

Line 6

民之從事，常於機成，而敗之。慎終如⁵⁶⁶始則無敗事。

The people [in] dealing [with] affairs constantly [have] many accomplishments, yet [they still] lose. [Be] cautious [at the] end like [it was the] start [and] then [there will be] no loss [in] affairs.

⁵⁵⁹ In the MWD versions A and B and the Guōdiàn, céng 層 (storey or floor) is chéng 成 (accomplish).

⁵⁶⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, qǐ 起 (get up) is zuò 作 (rise or grow).

⁵⁶¹ In the MWD version A, lèi 累 (tired) is léi 羸 (fatigued) and in the MWD version B it is léi 纍 (sedan).

⁵⁶² In the MWD versions A and B, qiān 千 (1000) is bǎi 百 (100).

⁵⁶³ In the MWD version A, lǐ 里 (miles) is rén 仁 (benevolent), and in the MWD version B it is qiān 千 (1000).

⁵⁶⁴ In the MWD versions A and B, xíng 行 (walk) is gāo 高 (high).

⁵⁶⁵ In the MWD version A, shǐ 始 (start) is tái 台 (platform).

⁵⁶⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, rú 如 (as if, like) is ruò 若 (as if, like) and in the Guōdiàn it is nǚ 女 (female).

MWD

民之從事也，恆於亓成事，而敗之。故曰，慎終⁵⁶⁷若始則無敗事矣。

Line 7

是以，聖人欲不欲，不貴難得之貨，學不學，復眾人之所過，以輔萬物之自然，而不敢為。

So, [the] sage desires [to have] no desire, [he does] not value [those] difficult [to] get goods, [he] learns not [to] learn, [he] returns [the] multitude [of] people to [what they were like] before, [he] assists [the] ten thousand things [to be] natural and dares not act.

MWD

是以，聖人欲不欲，不貴難得之貨，學不學，而復眾人之所過，能輔萬物之自然，而弗敢為。

Chapter 65 第六十五章**Line 1**

古之，善為道者，非以明民，將以愚之。

The ancients [who were] good [at practising] the Dào [did] not [want to] brighten [the] people [but] would [instead keep them] foolish.

MWD

古之⁵⁶⁸，#為道者，非以明民也，將以愚之也。

Line 2

民之難治，以其智⁵⁶⁹多。

The people [are] difficult [to] manage [when they have] lots [of] wisdom.

MWD

夫，民之難治也，以亓知#也。

Line 3

故，以智治⁵⁷⁰國，國之賊，不以智治國，國之福。

Therefore, [to use] wisdom [to] govern [a] state, [is to] rob the state, [using] no wisdom [to] govern [the] state [is to bring] happiness [to the] state.

MWD

故，以知知國⁵⁷¹，國之賊也，不以知知國，國德也。

Therefore, knowing [a] state [through] knowledge, [is to be] the state's thief, not knowing [a] state [through] knowledge [is to have a] quiescent state.

Line 4

知此兩者，亦稽⁵⁷²式。

[To] know these two [is to] also [know the] postponed pattern (model).

⁵⁶⁷ In the MWD version B, zhōng 終 (end) is dōng 冬 (this can mean “winter” or is an alternate form of dōng 冬, which means “bang” or “thud”).

⁵⁶⁸ In the MWD version B, gǔzhī 古之 (therefore) is gùyue 故曰 (therefore called).

⁵⁶⁹ In this chapter, in both the MWD A and B, zhī 知 (knowledge) is zhì 智 (wisdom).

⁵⁷⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, zhì 治 (manage) is zhī 知 (know).

⁵⁷¹ See n.181.

⁵⁷² The character jī 稽 has caused translators much difficulty. This paper has taken jī to come from jīyán 稽延, which means “to postpone” or “be delayed.” I chose the word postpone as in line 1, Lǎozǐ is talking about a system that is somewhat delaying or postponing any governing or interference on the people.

MWD

恆知此兩者，亦稽式也。

Line 5

常知稽式，是謂玄德。

Constantly knowing, [the] postponed pattern (model) is called profound quiescence.⁵⁷³

MWD

恆知稽式，是⁵⁷⁴胃玄德。

Line 6

玄德深矣，遠矣，與物反矣，然後乃至大順⁵⁷⁵。

Profound quiescence [is] deep [and] distant! [It appears to run] counter [to] things [but] afterwards [it] then arrives [at] great order.

MWD

玄德深矣，遠矣，與物反矣，##乃至大順。

Chapter 66 第六十六章**Line 1**

江海所以能為百谷⁵⁷⁶王者，以其善下之，故，能為百谷王。

Rivers [and] oceans [are] able [to be the] kings [of a] hundred (all) valleys because [they are] good [at being] below [them]. Therefore, [they are] able [to be the] kings [of a] hundred (all) valleys.

MWD

江海之所以能為百谷王者，以_元善下之也，是以，能為百谷王。

Line 2

是以，欲上民，必以言下之，欲先民，必以身後之。

So, [if one] desires [to be] above [the] people, [your] words must [be] below [them], [if one] desires [to be] before (lead) [the] people, [your] body [must be] behind [them].⁵⁷⁷

MWD

是以，聖人之欲⁵⁷⁸上民也，必以_元言下之，元欲先民也，必以_元身後⁵⁷⁹之。

Line 3

是以，聖人處⁵⁸⁰上，而民不重⁵⁸¹，處前，而民不害。

So, [the] sage's place [is] above, yet [the] people [are] not weighed [down by him], [his] place [is] in front, yet [the] people [are] not harmed.

⁵⁷³ This idea of profound quiescence is mentioned in the same context, in another two chapters; chapter 10, line 7: produced [and] raised. Produce, yet not [to] have, [to] act, yet not depend [on], [to] grow, yet not [to] slaughter. [This] is called profound quiescence; chapter 51, line 5: produce, yet not [to] have, [to] act yet, not depend [on], [to] grow, yet not [to] slaughter. [This] is called profound quiescence. This idea of profound quiescence is clearly the idea of non-interference.

⁵⁷⁴ In the MWD version A, shì 是 (is) is cǐ 此 (this).

⁵⁷⁵ The character shùn 順 means “to put in order.”

⁵⁷⁶ In the MWD versions A and B and the Guōdiàn, gǔ 谷 is yù 浴 (to bathe in the sun or wind).

⁵⁷⁷ To understand this line better, it could be translated as: so, if one desires to rule the people, your words must be modest, if one desires to lead the people, you should put yourself second.

⁵⁷⁸ In the Guōdiàn, yù 欲 (desire) is cái 才 (ability, talent, capable).

⁵⁷⁹ In the Guōdiàn, hòu 後 (back, behind) is xià 下 (below).

⁵⁸⁰ In the MWD versions A and B, chǔ 處 (reside or dwell) is jū 居 (residence), and in the Guōdiàn it is cái 才 (ability or talent or used as a grammatical word).

⁵⁸¹ In the Guōdiàn, zhòng 重 (heavy) is hòu 厚 (thick), and in the MWD version A it is hài 害 (harm).

MWD

故，##居⁵⁸²上，而民弗重也，居前，而民不害也。

Line 4

是以，天下樂推⁵⁸³，而不厭⁵⁸⁴。

So, [everything that is] underneath [the] sky [is] happily pushing [him forward,] yet without tiring.

MWD

##，天下皆樂誰，而弗厭也。

Line 5

以其不爭，故，天下莫能與之爭。

[This] is [because the] sage [does] not contend, therefore, in [everything that is] underneath [the] sky, nothing can contend [with] him.

MWD

不⁵⁸⁵以元無爭⁵⁸⁶與，故，天下莫能與#爭。

Chapter 67 第六十七章**Line 1**

天下皆謂我道大，似不肖。

Everything [that is] underneath [the] sky calls my Dào great [but it] seems like [it is] not.

MWD

天下#謂我#大，大⁵⁸⁷似⁵⁸⁸不肖⁵⁸⁹。

[Everything] underneath [the] sky calls me great, great yet [I am] not dark.

Line 2

夫唯，大，故，似不肖。

Now, only [because it is] great, therefore, [it seems] like [it is] not worthy.

MWD

夫唯，不肖，故，能大。

Now, only because [I am] not dark, therefore, [I am] great.

Line 3

若肖，久矣，其細也。

[If it was] like [being] worthy, [it would have] long [ago become] minute (trivial).

MWD

若肖，久矣，元細也。

Line 4

夫，我有三寶，持，而保之，一曰慈，二曰檢，三曰不敢為天下先。

⁵⁸² In the MWD version A, shàng 上 (up) is qián 前 (in front).

⁵⁸³ In the MWD version A, tuī 推 (push) is sǔn 隼 (falcon or eagle), in the MWD version B it is shéi 誰 (who) and in the Guōdiàn it is jìn 進 (advance).

⁵⁸⁴ See n.616.

⁵⁸⁵ In the MWD version A, bù 不 (no) is fēi 非 (not).

⁵⁸⁶ In the MWD version A, zhēng 爭 (contend) is zhèng 諍 (criticise or expostulate), and in the Guōdiàn, it is jìng 靜 (stillness).

⁵⁸⁷ Some MWD version B omits 大.

⁵⁸⁸ In the MWD version B, sì 似 (similar or like) is ér 而 (yet).

⁵⁸⁹ In the MWD version B, xiào 肖 (resemble) is xiāo 宵 (night, evening or dark). This is the same throughout the chapter.

Now, I have three treasures [that I] hold and protect: first [is] called parental affection, second [is] called frugality [and the] third [is] called daring not to be [at the] front [of everything that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD

夫，我恒有三保⁵⁹⁰，持⁵⁹¹，而保之，一曰茲⁵⁹²，二曰檢，三曰不敢為天下先夫。

Line 5

慈，故，能勇，檢，故，能廣，不敢天下先，故，能成器長。

Parental affection, therefore able [to be] brave [and] frugal, therefore able [to be] expansive [and] not daring [to be at the] front [of everything that is] underneath [the] sky, therefore able [to] completely grow [into a] vessel.

MWD

茲，故，能勇，檢，故，能廣，不敢為天下先，故，能成器⁵⁹³長。

Line 6

今舍慈且勇，舍檢且廣，舍後且先死矣。

Now⁵⁹⁴ [to] abandon parental affection but [to be] daring, [to] abandon frugality but [to be] expansive, [to] abandon [being] behind, so [as to be in] front [is] death.

MWD

今舍茲且勇，舍檢且廣，舍後且先則必死矣。

Line 7

夫，慈，以戰則勝，以守則固。

Now, [because of] parental affection, so [in] war there is victory, so [in military] defence there is firmness.

MWD

夫，茲，以戰⁵⁹⁵則勝⁵⁹⁶，以守則固。

Line 8

天將救⁵⁹⁷之，以慈衛⁵⁹⁸之。

[When the] sky wants [to] save, it guards [with] parental affection.

MWD

天將建之，如⁵⁹⁹以茲垣之。

Chapter 68 第六十八章

Line 1

善為士者，不武，善戰者，不怒，善勝敵者，不與，善用人者，為之下。

[A] good soldier [does] not [show his] martial skill, good fighting [is done with] no anger, [being] good [at] defeating [an] enemy [is with] no participation [and being] good [at] using people [is] to be below [them].

⁵⁹⁰ In the MWD version B, bǎo 寶 (treasure) is bǎo 保 (protect), and in the MWD version A, it is bǎo 葆 (preserve or nurture).

⁵⁹¹ In the MWD version B, chí 持 (hold) is shì 市 (market).

⁵⁹² In MWD versions A and B, cí 慈 (kind or loving) is cí 茲 (now). This is the same in line 5.

⁵⁹³ In the MWD version A, qì 器 (implement) is shì 事 (matter or affair).

⁵⁹⁴ This “now” is different from the “now” of fū 夫, this “now” jīn 今 is the “now” of time; as in right “now.”

⁵⁹⁵ See n.600.

⁵⁹⁶ See n.322.

⁵⁹⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, jiù 救 (rescue) is jiàn 建 (build, set up or construct).

⁵⁹⁸ In the MWD versions A and B, wèi 衛 (protect) is yuán 垣 (wall).

⁵⁹⁹ In the MWD version A, rú 如 (as if, like) is added, in the Guōdiàn it is nǚ 女 (female, but in this case is clearly an alternative form of rú).

MWD

故，善為士者，不武，善戰⁶⁰⁰者，不怒，善勝⁶⁰¹敵者，弗與，善用人者，為之下。

Line 2

是謂不爭之德，是謂用人之力，是謂配⁶⁰²天古之極。

[This] is called [the] quiescence of non-contention, [it] is [also] called using [the] strength [of] people [and it] is [also] called the utmost (pinnacle) [of] joining [the] sky [of] old.

MWD

是謂不爭⁶⁰³之德，是謂用人^{##}，是謂肥⁶⁰⁴天古之極。

Chapter 69 第六十九章**Line 1**

用兵有言，吾不敢為主，而為客，不敢進寸，而退尺。

[In] using soldiers, [there are the following] sayings: “I dare not [be] the host, only the guest; [I] dare not advance [an] inch, only retreat [a] foot.”

MWD

用兵有言，曰吾不敢為主，而為客，吾不敢進寸，而退⁶⁰⁴尺。

Line 2

是謂行無行，攘無臂，扔無敵，執無兵。

[This] is called moving without moving, [to] roll up one's sleeves up without [showing one's] arms, [to] throw (attack) without [an] enemy [and to] hold without [a] weapon.

MWD

是謂行無行，攘無臂，執無兵，乃無敵矣。

[This] is called moving without moving, [to] roll up one's sleeves without [showing one's] arms, [to] take charge without [an] army, thus [there is] no enemy!

Line 3

禍莫大於輕敵，輕敵機喪吾寶。

[There is] no greater calamity than [to make] light [of your] enemy, [making] light [of your] enemy [and an] opportunity [is] lost, [and so is] my treasure.

MWD

禍莫大於無敵⁶⁰⁵，無敵機⁶⁰⁶亡吾葆⁶⁰⁷矣。

[There is] no greater calamity than [having] no enemy, [to have] no enemy [and] I approach losing [my] preservation.

Line 4

故，抗兵相加，哀者，勝矣。

Therefore, fighting armies [that are] mutually together (engaged) [in combat], [it is the] grieving [one which will] defeat [the other]!

⁶⁰⁰ In the MWD version B, zhàn 戰 (fight) is dān 單 (single or solitary).

⁶⁰¹ See n.322.

⁶⁰² In the MWD version B, pèi 配 (join) is féi 肥 (fat or plump).

⁶⁰³ In the MWD version A, zhèng 爭 (contend) is zhèng 諍 (admonish).

⁶⁰⁴ See n.100.

⁶⁰⁵ In the MWD version A, dí 敵 (enemy) is shì 適 (be fit, be suitable, be proper, in this case it should be an alternative form of dí).

⁶⁰⁶ In the MWD version A, jī 機 (near) is jīn 斤 (axe, shrewd, unit of measure).

⁶⁰⁷ In MWD version A, bǎo 寶 (protect or defend) is bǎo 葆 (preserve or nurture).

MWD

故，抗⁶⁰⁸兵相若，哀⁶⁰⁹者，勝⁶¹⁰矣。

Chapter 70 七十第章**Line 1**

吾言甚易知，甚易行。

My words [are] very easy [to] know [and] very easy [to] walk (practise).

MWD

吾言甚易知也，甚易行也。

Line 2

天下莫能知，莫能行。

[But] no [one] underneath [the] sky [is] able [to] know (understand) [them and] no [one can] walk (practise) [them].

MWD

而天下之莫能知也，而莫之能行也。

Line 3

言有宗，事有君。

Words have [their] ancestor,⁶¹¹ affairs have [their] monarch.

MWD

夫，言又宗，事有君。

Line 4

夫唯，無知，是以，不我知。

Now, only [because they do] not know (understand), so [they do] not know (understand) me.

MWD

夫唯，無知也，是以，不我知。

Line 5

知我者，希則我者，貴。

[Those who] know (understand) me [are] few, thus I [am] valuable.

MWD

知者，希則我貴矣。

Line 6

是以，聖人被褐，懷⁶¹²玉。

So, [the] sage wears coarse [clothes and] carries jade [in his] bosom (heart or chest).

MWD

是以，聖人被褐，而褰玉。

⁶⁰⁸ In the MWD version A, kàng 抗 (resist, combat, fight) is chèn or chēng 稱 (call, name, say).

⁶⁰⁹ In the MWD version A, āi 哀 (mourn, lament or grieve) is yī 依 (depend on, rely on).

⁶¹⁰ See n.322.

⁶¹¹ Ancestor is one translation, another is “principal aim” or “purpose.”

⁶¹² In the MWD versions A and B, huái 懷 (bosom or mind) is huái 褰 (to carry in the bosom)

Chapter 71 第七十一章**Line 1**

知不知，上，不知，知，病。

Knowing [that you do] not know [is] superior, not knowing [you do not] know [is a] sickness.

MWD

知不知，尚矣，不知，知，病矣。

Knowing [that you do] not know; esteemed! Not knowing [you do] not know; sickness!

Line 2

夫唯，病病，是以，不病。

Now, only [by being] sick [of] sickness, so [will there be] no sickness.

MWD

##，##，##，##。

Line 3

聖人不病，以其病病，是以，不病。

[The] sage [is] not sick because he [is] sick [of] sickness, so [therefore, he is] not sick.⁶¹³

MWD

是以，聖人之不病也，以疋病病也，是以，不病。

Chapter 72 第七十二章**Line 1**

民不畏威則大威至。

[When the] people [do] not fear power, then great power arrives.

MWD

民不畏#則大畏將至矣。

[When the] people [do] not fear, then great fear will arrive!

Line 2

無狎⁶¹⁴其所居，無厭其⁶¹⁵所生。

[Do] not [be] familiar [with people in] their dwellings [and do] not [grow] sick [of them in] their living.

MWD

毋闡疋所居，毋厭疋所生。

Line 3

夫唯，不厭⁶¹⁶，是以，不厭。

Now only [because there is], no dislike, so [there is] no rejection.

MWD

夫唯，弗厭，是以，不厭。

⁶¹³ It is interesting to note here how critical Lǎozǐ was of thinking you know something when you do not. He was so critical of it, he spoke of it as a disease.

⁶¹⁴ In the MWD version A, wúxiá 無狎 (not familiar) is mǔzhā 毋闡 (the meaning is unclear in the context of the sentence and maybe incorrectly recorded by the original scribe). In the MWD version B, it is mǔxiá 毋狹 (not narrow).

⁶¹⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, wúyàn 無厭 (no dislike, sick, rejection) is mǔyàn 毋厭 (not eat one's fill).

⁶¹⁶ In the MWD versions A and B, and throughout this chapter, yàn 厭 (dislike, sick, rejection) is yàn 厭 (eat one's fill).

Line 4

是以，聖人自知不自見，自愛不自貴。

So, [the] sage knows himself [but does] not see himself, [he] loves himself [but does] not value himself.

MWD

是以，聖人自知而不自見也，自愛而不自貴也。

Line 5

故，去彼取此。

Therefore, [he] leaves that [and] gets this.⁶¹⁷

MWD

故，去彼，而取此⁶¹⁸。

Chapter 73 第七十三章**Line 1**

勇於敢則殺，勇於不敢則活。

Courageous at daring, thus death (one is killed), courageous at not daring, thus life (one lives).

MWD

勇於敢者則殺，勇於不敢則活⁶¹⁹。

Line 2

此兩者，或利或害。

These two, either [have] benefit or harm.

MWD

#兩者，或利或害。

Line 3

天之所惡，孰知其故。是以，聖人猶難之。

[What the] sky [finds] evil, who knows why? So, [the] sage also [has] difficulties [in understanding why].⁶²⁰

MWD

天之所惡⁶²¹，孰知_元故。##，#####。

Line 4

天之道，不爭，而善勝，不言，而善應，不召，而自來，_彈⁶²²然，而善謀。

[The] sky's _{Dào} [does] not contend and [therefore is] good [at] defeating, [it does] not speak, yet [it is] good [at] responding, [it does] not summon, yet [it] comes itself, [it is] relaxed, yet good [at] planning.

MWD

天之道，不爭⁶²³，而善勝⁶²⁴，不言，而善應，不召，而自來，_彈然，而善謀。

⁶¹⁷ The same five characters are found in chapter 12, line 6, and chapter 38, line 7.

⁶¹⁸ In the MWD version A, these last six characters are: 故，去彼取此, and in version B, bèi 被 (cover) is bà 罷 (stop, cease, finish).

⁶¹⁹ In the MWD version B, húo 活 (life) is guā 枯 (a measuring frame).

⁶²⁰ Even the sage finds it difficult to understand nature's ways.

⁶²¹ In the MWD version B, è 惡 (ugly) is yà 亞 (inferior).

⁶²² In the MWD version A, chǎn 彈 (relaxed or indulgent) is 彈 and is most likely pronounced dàn. In the MWD version B, it is dān 單. These characters do not make sense in their modern translation but may mean to “shoot.” As in shoot a pellet.

⁶²³ In the MWD version B, zhēng 爭 (contend or strive) is dān 單 (single, individual, only).

⁶²⁴ See n.322.

Line 5

天網恢恢，疏，而不失。

[The] net [of the] sky [is] vast, [it] scatters but [does] not neglect (anything).⁶²⁵

MWD

天網⁶²⁶恢恢，疏，而不失。

Chapter 74 第七十四章**Line 1**

民不畏死，奈何以死⁶²⁷懼之。

[The] people [do] not fear death, [so] how [are you going to] fear [them with] death.

MWD

若民恆且不畏死，奈⁶²⁸何以殺懼之也。

Line 2

若使民常畏死，而為奇者，吾得執，而殺之，孰敢。

If [you] make [the] people constantly fear death, yet [one] does strange (devious) [things], I will grab [them] and kill [them], [then] who [will] dare [to be strange].

MWD

若使民恆且畏死則而為奇⁶²⁹者，吾將得#，而殺之，夫，孰敢矣。

Line 3

常有司殺者，殺⁶³⁰。

[To] constantly have [an] executioner [is to have] killing.

MWD

若民恆且必畏死則恆又司殺者。

If [the] people constantly must fear death, then [there will] constantly be [an] executioner.

Line 4

夫，代司殺者，殺，是謂代大匠斲。

Now, [to] replace [the] executioner's killing is called replacing [him with the] master craftsman's chop.

MWD

夫，代⁶³¹司殺者，殺，是#，代大匠斲也。

Line 5

夫，代大匠斲者，希有不傷其手矣。

Now, [to] replace [the] master craftsman's chop, [only a] few [will] have [their hands] not damaged (cut).

MWD

夫，代大匠斲者，則希#不傷元手矣。

⁶²⁵ If you were to throw or scatter marbles on the grass, certain areas would not have marbles; the sky is not like this, it is everywhere and does not neglect anything.

⁶²⁶ In the MWD version B, gāng 綱 (head rope of a finishing net or guiding principle) is wǎng 罔 (this is an old variant of 网 and means “net”).

⁶²⁷ In the MWD versions A and B, sǐ 死 (death) is shà 殺 (to kill).

⁶²⁸ In the MWD version A, nài (how) is ruò 若 (like).

⁶²⁹ In the MWD version B, qí 奇 (strange) is jī 畸 (lopsided or unbalanced).

⁶³⁰ This character is omitted in some versions, but I have included it, as nearly all copies have it. It does seem as though the original Wáng Bì version did not include it.

⁶³¹ In the MWD version A, dài 代 (replace) is fá 伐 (to cut down). This is the same throughout the chapter.

Chapter 75 第七十五章

Line 1

民⁶³²之飢，以其上⁶³³食稅之多，是以，飢。

[The] people [are] hungry because [their] superiors (leaders) take⁶³⁴ [too] many taxes, so [they are] hungry.

MWD

人之飢也，以_元取食稅之多也，是以，飢。

Line 2

民之難治，以其上之有為，是以，難治。

People [are] hard [to] manage because their superiors (leaders) have action, so [they are] difficult [to] manage.

MWD

百姓⁶³⁵之_不治也，以_元上之有_以為，是以，_不治。

The hundred surnames [are] not manageable because their superiors (leaders) have action, so [they are] not manageable.

Line 3

民之輕死，以其求生之厚，是以，輕死。

[When] people [take] death lightly, [this is] because they [are] richly seeking life, so [the people take] death lightly.

MWD

民之輕⁶³⁶死也，以_元求生之厚也，是以，輕⁶³⁷死。

Line 4

夫唯，無以生為者，是賢於貴生。

Now, only [one who has] nothing to do [in] life is worthy at valuing life. ⁶³⁸

MWD

夫唯，無以生為者，是賢#貴生。

Chapter 76 第七十六章

Line 1

人之生也，柔弱，其死也，堅強。

[At] birth humans [are] soft⁶³⁹ [and] weak, at death [they are] hard [and] strong (tough).

MWD

人之生也，柔弱，_元死也，恆信⁶⁴⁰堅⁶⁴¹強。

⁶³² In the MWD versions A and B, mín 民 (people) is rén 人 (people).

⁶³³ In the MWD versions A and B, shàng 上 (upper) is qǔ 取 (to get).

⁶³⁴ Lǎozǐ uses the characters shíshuì 食稅 (eat tax). I have changed this “eat” to “take.”

⁶³⁵ In the MWD version B, xìng 姓 (surname) is shéng 生 (produce).

⁶³⁶ In the MWD version A, qīng 輕 (light) is jīng 涇 (flowing water or underground stream).

⁶³⁷ In the MWD version A, qīng 輕 (light) is jīng 涇 (flowing water or underground stream).

⁶³⁸ In this chapter, it seems as though Lǎozǐ is talking about rulers who interfere too much in the governing of people and are too ambitious. These two combined characteristics together only hurt the people.

⁶³⁹ The idea of softness is a common recurring theme within the *Dàodéjīng* and is mentioned many times. See Appendix 1, pg. 165.

⁶⁴⁰ In the MWD version B, xìn 信 is added, and in version A, it is (trust) is rèn 仞. This is an alternative form for many characters: 刃 (rèn, “blade; sword; knife”); 仞 (rèn, “to fill; full”); 認 / 认 (rèn, “to recognize”); 忍 (rěn, “to endure”); 韌 / 韧 (rèn, “strong, tough”).

⁶⁴¹ In the MWD version A, jiān 堅 (strong, solid, firm) is xián 賢 (worthy, virtuous or able).

Line 2

萬物草木之生也，柔脆，其死也，枯槁。

[At] birth, [the] ten thousand things, [the] plants [and] trees [are] soft [and] full, [at] death [they are] dry [and] withered.

MWD

萬物草木之生也，柔脆，死也，枯槁。

Line 3

故，堅强者，死之徒，柔弱⁶⁴²者，生之徒。

Therefore, [the] hard [and] strong follow death, [the] soft [and] weak follow life.

MWD

故，堅强者，死之徒也，柔弱微細，生之徒也。

Line 4

是以，兵强則不勝，木强則共⁶⁴³。

So, [a] strong army will not win [and] strong wood will break.

MWD

#以，兵强則不勝⁶⁴⁴，木强則恆。

Line 5

强大處下，柔弱處上。

[The] strong [and] great [have their place] below, [while the] soft [and] weak [have their place] above.

MWD

强大居下，柔弱微細居上。

Chapter 77 第七十七章**Line 1**

天之道，其猶張弓與。高者，抑⁶⁴⁵下，下者，舉之，有餘者，損之，不足者，補之。

The sky's Dào, [is] it [not] like drawing a bow[string]? Up [is] pressed down, down [is] lifted [up], [to] have [a] surplus [is to be] reduced, [to have] deficiency [is to be] supplemented.

MWD

天之道，#張弓#也。高者，印下，下者，舉之，有餘者，損之⁶⁴⁶，不足者，補之。

Line 2

天之道，損有餘，而補不足。

The sky's Dào [is to] reduce [what] has surplus and [to] supplement [that which is] deficient.

MWD

故，天之道，損⁶⁴⁷有余，而補⁶⁴⁸不足。

⁶⁴² In the MWD version A, wēixi 微細 (small and tiny) is added. This is the same in line 5.

⁶⁴³ In the MWD version A, gòng 共 (together) is héng 恆 (constant), in the MWD version B, it is jīng 兢 (cautious). This character has a number of different characters used for it, depending on the book. They can include: shé 折 (break) and bīng 兵 (soldier). To “break” makes the most sense in the context of the line.

⁶⁴⁴ In the MWD version B, shèng 勝 (win) is fēng 朕 (I the sovereign).

⁶⁴⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, yì 抑 (press down) is yìn 印 (seal or engrave).

⁶⁴⁶ In the MWD version B, 有餘者，損之 reads 有余，者云之。

⁶⁴⁷ In the MWD version B, sǔn 損 (decrease) is yún 云 (speak or say). This is the same throughout the chapter.

⁶⁴⁸ In the MWD version B, bǔ 補 (tonify or supplement) is yì 益 (increase).

Line 3

人之道則不然，損不足以奉有餘。

The Dào [of] man is not so, [it] reduces [what is] deficient [and] offers [to that which] has surplus.

MWD

人之道#不然，損不足以奉有餘⁶⁴⁹。

Line 4

孰能有餘以奉天下，唯有道者。

[Those] who [are] able [to] have surplus [and give] offerings [to everything that is] underneath [the] sky, only [they] have [the] Dào.

MWD

夫，孰能有餘，而有以取奉於天者乎，唯又道者乎。

Line 5

是以，聖人為，而不恃，功成，而不處，其不欲見賢。

So, [the] sage acts, yet [does] not depend on,⁶⁵⁰ accomplishes, yet [does] not dwell [and does] not desire [to] show [his] worth.

MWD

是以，聖人為，而弗又，成功，而弗居也，若此元不欲見賢也。

Chapter 78 第七十八章**Line 1**

天下莫柔弱⁶⁵¹於水，而攻堅強⁶⁵²者，莫之能勝，以其無以易之。

[In all that is] underneath [the] sky nothing [is] softer [and] weaker than water, yet [in] attacking [the] hard [and] strong, nothing can defeat [it], [this is] because its emptiness is changeable.

MWD

天下莫柔弱於水，##堅強者，莫之能#也，以元無以易之也。

Line 2

弱之勝強，柔之勝剛⁶⁵³，天下莫不知，莫能行。

[The] weak defeats [the] strong, [the] soft defeats [the] hard, [in everything that is] underneath [the] sky, no [one does] not know [this but] no [one is] able [to] do [it].

MWD

水之朕剛也，弱之勝⁶⁵⁴強也，天下莫弗不知也，而##行也。

Line 3

是以，聖人云，受國之垢⁶⁵⁵，是謂社稷主，受國不祥，是為天下王。

So, [the] sage says: “[to] receive, the filth [of the] state is called [the] governing altar for the gods of earth and grain. [To] receive [the] bad luck [of the] state is [the] king [of everything that is] underneath [the] sky.”

MWD

是故，聖人之言云，曰，受國⁶⁵⁶之詬，是胃社稷之主，受國⁶⁵⁷之不祥，是胃天下之王。

⁶⁴⁹ In the MWD version B, yǒuyú 有餘 is yòuyú 有余. This is the same in line 4.

⁶⁵⁰ “[To] act, yet not depend on” is also found in: chapter 2, line 4; chapter 10, line 7; chapter 51, line 5.

⁶⁵¹ As one word in modern Chinese, róuruò 柔弱 means “soft,” as separate words, they mean “soft” and “weak.”

⁶⁵² As one word in modern Chinese, jiānqiáng 堅強 means strong, as separate words they mean “hard” and “strong.”

⁶⁵³ The characters of jiān 堅, qiáng 強 and gāng 剛 are interchangeable and all similar in meaning.

⁶⁵⁴ In the MWD version B, shèng 勝 (win) is zhèn 朕 (I the sovereign)

⁶⁵⁵ In the MWD versions A and B, gòu 垢 (dirty and filthy) is gòu 詬 (shame or humiliation).

Line 4

正言若反。

Upright (true) words seem [to be in] reverse.

MWD

正言若反。

Chapter 79 第七十九章**Line 1**

和大怨，必有餘怨，安可以為善。

[In] harmonising great resentment, [there] must have [some] surplus resentment [left over], how can [this] be good?

MWD

和⁶⁵⁸大怨，必有餘怨，焉可以為善。

Line 2

是以，聖人執左契⁶⁵⁹，而不責於人。

So, [the] sage holds [the] left contract,⁶⁶⁰ yet [does] not demand [from] people.

MWD

是以，聖人執左芥，而不責於人。

Line 3

有德司契，無德司徼⁶⁶¹。

[One who] has quiescence [is in] charge [of the] contract, [those] without quiescence [are in] charge [of] taxes.

MWD

故，有⁶⁶²德司契，無德司徼。

Line 4

天道無親，常與善人。

[The] sky's Dào [has] no relatives (preferential treatment), [and is] constantly with good people.

MWD

夫，天道無親，恆與善人。

Chapter 80 第八十章**Line 1**

小國⁶⁶³寡民，使有什伯之器，而不用，使民重死，而不遠徙。

[A] small state [with] few people makes ten multiples [of a] hundred implements, yet [does] not use [them]. Make [the] people [feel] heavy [about] death and [do] not [let them] move far away (leave).

⁶⁵⁶ In the MWD version A, guó 國 (state) is bāng 邦 (state).

⁶⁵⁷ In the MWD version A, guó 國 (state) is bāng 邦 (state).

⁶⁵⁸ In the MWD version B, hé 和 (harmony) is hé 禾 (grain or seedling).

⁶⁵⁹ In the MWD version A, qì 契 (contract) is jiè 介 (shell), and in the MWD version B it is jiè 芥 (tiny things). This is the same in line 3.

⁶⁶⁰ The left contract most likely refers to the debtor's contract.

⁶⁶¹ The character ché 徼 as a word itself means “penetrating.”

⁶⁶² In the MWD version B, yǒu 有 (have) is yòu 又 (also).

⁶⁶³ In the MWD version A, guó 國 (state) is bāng 邦 (state). This is the same in line 3.

MWD

小國寡民，使有十百人之器，而不勿⁶⁶⁴用，使民重死，而#遠徙。

Line 2

雖有舟輿，無所乘之。雖有甲兵，無所陳之。使人復結繩，而用之。

Although [they] have boats [and] carts, [there is] no [place to] ride [them]. Although [they] have armour [and] weapons [there is] no [place] to display [them]. Make [the] people again tie knots and use [them] (to keep records).

MWD

#有車周，無所乘之。#有甲兵，無所陳之。使人復結繩，而用之。

Line 3

甘其食，美其服，安其居，樂其俗，鄰國相望，雞犬之聲相聞，民至老死不相往來。

Sweet foods, beautiful clothes, quiet dwellings [and] happy customs. Neighboring states look [at] each other, the sounds [of] chickens [and] dogs [also] heard [by] each other, [the] people reach [an] old [age and] die without mutually going back [and] forth.⁶⁶⁵

MWD

甘元食，美元服，###，樂元俗，安元居，鄰國相望，雞犬⁶⁶⁶之聲相聞，民至老死不相往來。

Chapter 81 第八十一章**Line 1**

信言不美，美言不信。

Trustworthy words [are] not beautiful, beautiful words [are] not trustworthy.

MWD

信言不美，美言不信。

Line 2

善者，不辯，辯者，不善。

Good [does] not distinguish, distinguishing [is] not good.

MWD (see line 3)

知者，不博，博者，不知。

Line 3

知者，不博⁶⁶⁷，博者，不知。

Knowing [is] not extensive, extensiveness [is] not knowing.

MWD

善者，不多，多者，不善。

Good [is to have] no excess, [having] excess [is] not good.

Line 4

聖人不積，既以爲人，己愈⁶⁶⁸有，既以與人，己愈多。

[The] sage [does] not accumulate. [He] acts [for] the people, [so the] more he [will] have. [He] gives [to the] people, [so the even] more [abundant] he [will be].

⁶⁶⁴ In the MWD version A, wú 毋 is added, and in version B it is wù 勿 (do not).

⁶⁶⁵ “Without visiting each other.”

⁶⁶⁶ In the MWD version A, quǎn 犬 (dog) is gǒu 狗 (dog).

⁶⁶⁷ The character bó 博 means “extensive.” Lǎozǐ is most likely referring to someone who has extensive knowledge.

⁶⁶⁸ In this line, in the MWD version B, yù 愈 (more) is yú 俞 (consent or approve).

MWD

聖人無積，既以為人，己愈有，既以與⁶⁶⁹人矣，己愈多。

Line 5

天之道利，而不害。

The sky's *Dào* benefits [all] and [does] not harm [any].

MWD

故，天之道利，而不害。

Line 6

聖人之道為，而不爭。

[The] *Dào* [of the] sage acts, yet [does] not contend.

MWD

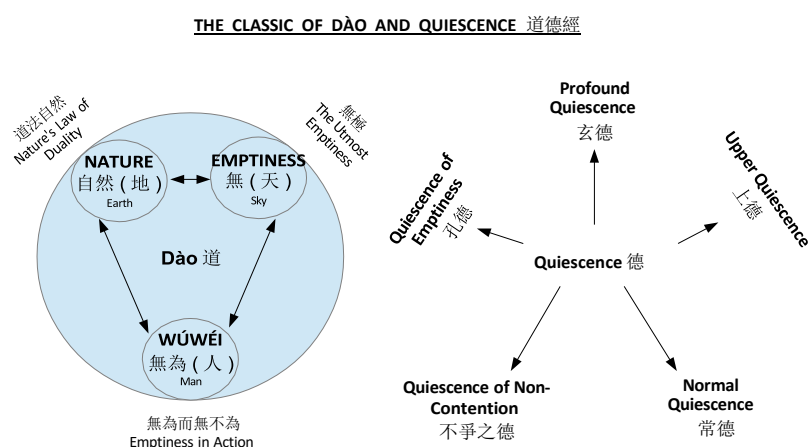
#人之道為，而弗爭。

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be summarised that Lǎozǐ's *Dào* is the profound, mysterious, and abstruse aspect within emptiness that has given rise to everything we see. Lǎozǐ described this concept as “emptiness in action.” He uses feminine similes such as the valley spirit, the profound female, and the mother to represent it. Lǎozǐ taught that people should aim to return to the *Dào*, which means returning to a peaceful, still, content, and quiet state of original being. The techniques used to achieve this included: living simply, avoiding contention, knowing when enough is enough (or avoiding excess), being humble and frugal, having few (or no) desires and aspirations, being like water, embracing softness, and following nature's way as a guiding principle for life. From these core ideas, Lǎozǐ developed the five quiescences: quiescence of the profound, quiescence of emptiness, upper quiescence, quiescence of non-contention, and quiescence of nature.

As the *Dàodéjīng* may have been a text primarily intended for rulers, it appears that Lǎozǐ's cornerstone philosophy for governance was based on the idea of letting things take their natural course and not interfering too much. He called this idea profound quiescence. Lǎozǐ presents the sage as an exemplar for rulers to model themselves on and primarily describes sages as men who do not interfere, do not contend, do not use their wisdom, do not accumulate possessions, do not go to extremes, place themselves behind the people, are modest, and allow the people to live naturally—whereby they benefit a hundredfold and love their ruler.

For a final summary of Lǎozǐ's philosophy, the following model is proposed:



By Shaun Ramsden

Figure 1. Proposed model for Lǎozǐ's philosophy

⁶⁶⁹ In the MWD version B, yǔ 與 (to give) is yú 予 (to give).

In the figure above, it is the trinity model that makes up Lǎozǐ's Dào and its core teachings, which adhere to the sky, earth, man model.⁶⁷⁰ The five core quiescences described in the *Dàodéjīng* are also depicted.

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⁶⁷⁰ See 《太上老君中經.卷上》 *Tàishàng Lǎojūn Zhōngjīng* for the trinity model. The sky is 1, the earth is 2 and man is 3.

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Appendix 1: The *Dàodéjīng*'s Core Concepts

Within the *Dàodéjīng*, there appear to be thirteen core concepts:

1. Dào 道
2. Quiescence 德
3. Non-action 無為
4. Stillness 靜
5. Valley, female, mother 谷, 雌, 母

6. Softness 柔弱
7. Nature 自然
8. Return 歸
9. Emptiness 無
10. Simplicity 樸
11. The constant 常/恆
12. No desire 無欲
13. The sage 聖人

These thirteen concepts are discussed below but it is important to keep in mind that they all seem to be different angles that point to one core theme, which in this case is the *Dào*.

Dào 道

In trying to understand what the *Dào* is, one needs to analyse Lǎozǐ's own descriptions. Firstly, it is described as something similar to emptiness:

1. Chapter 4, line 1: [the] *Dào* is [like an] empty utensil, yet [in] use [it is] not filled.

Secondly, it is something that cannot be described with language:

1. Chapter 1, line 1: [the] *Dào* [that] can [be the] *Dào*, [is] not [the] constant *Dào*.
2. Chapter 25, line 2: I [do] not know its name, the word [I use to] call [it is] *Dào*.
3. Chapter 32, line 1: [the] constant *Dào* [has the] nameless simplicity.

Thirdly, it is something that cannot be seen; we just kind of know it is there.

1. Chapter 21, line 2: [if] *Dào* is [a] thing, [it is] only indistinct [and] only dim.
2. Chapter 35, line 4: [when the] *Dào* exits, [it is] completely bland [and] it [is] tasteless, look [at it and there is] not enough [to] see [it], listen [to it and there is] not enough [to] hear [it], use [it and there is] not enough [to] finish [it].

Fourthly, it is very similar to nature:

1. Chapter 25, line 5: *Dào* patterns (models) [itself on] nature.

Fifthly, it made everything and came before anything:

1. Chapter 42, line 1: [the] *Dào* produces one, one produces two, two produces three [and] three produces [the] ten thousand things.
2. Chapter 14, line 7: [to be] able [to] know [the] ancient beginnings is called [the] chronicles [of] *Dào*.
3. Chapter 25, line 1: [there was some] thing mixed becoming, [it was] before [the] sky [and] produced [the] earth, still ah, silent ah, standing alone, [with] no change, moving cyclically, yet without danger (end), [it] can be [the] mother [of all that is] underneath [the] sky.

Sixthly, the *Dào* is hidden, without form and is nameless:

1. Chapter 41, line 2: [the] big image [has] no form, [the] hidden *Dào* [is] nameless.
2. Chapter 1, line 2: nameless, the start [of the] sky [and the] earth.

From reviewing the above lines, it seems as though Lǎozǐ may be describing the *Dào* as something similar to emptiness. The key difference though, is that Lǎozǐ does not see emptiness as empty. Lǎozǐ's emptiness has something profound, mysterious and abstruse to it:

1. Chapter 1, line 5: profound [and] even more profound, the gate [to] all [the] mysteries.
2. Chapter 62, line 1: [the] *Dào* [is the] abstruse [mystery of] ten thousand things.

Lǎozǐ's *Dào* may be the profound, mysterious, and abstruse something within emptiness that has produced and maintained both the earth and the sky and everything in-between. It seems that according to Lǎozǐ, emptiness is not intrinsically empty, as it can do anything, as it produces everything we see.

Quiescence 德

Lǎozǐ spoke of what may be called the minor quiescences; chapter 38, line 1: lower quiescence; chapter 41, line 2: extensive quiescence and established quiescence; chapter 49, line 2: quiescence of goodness; chapter 49, line

3: quiescence of trustfulness and chapter 59, line 2: heavily accumulated quiescence. Lǎozǐ also spoke of what could be called the five main quiescences (virtues) of the *Dàodéjīng*:

1. Xuánnǐ dé 玄德: quiescence of the profound; chapter 10, line 7; chapter 51, line 5; chapter 65, lines 5 and 6.
2. Kǒngǐ dé 孔德: quiescence of emptiness; chapter 21, line 1.
3. Shàngǐ dé 上德: upper quiescence; chapter 38, line 1 and 2; chapter 41, line 2.
4. Bùzhēng zhǐ dé 不爭之德: quiescence of non-contention; chapter 68, line 2.
5. Chángǐ dé 常德: quiescence of nature; chapter 28, lines 1, 2 and 3.

From these five “virtues,” it can clearly be seen that the words virtue, virtuosity, integrity, or inner power appear to be incorrect translations. The English and Confucian meaning of virtue is to do with having high moral standards. Lǎozǐ recommends nature’s way and following its principles as the highest form of living. Just as nature can seem very harsh and certainly lacking in morals in the human sense of the word, Lǎozǐ said, treat the people like (sacrificial) straw dogs (chapter 5, line 1). Lǎozǐ’s dé had little to do with morals in the modern sense of the word. From the above five “virtues,” it can be observed that Lǎozǐ’s “virtue” was based on following the principles of Dào, and therefore, being natural in personal living and the governing of a state. The “virtues” mentioned above are the wisdom of the Dào. Initially, I had decided to keep dé translated as virtue (due to its prolific use) but as this paper is a direct translation into English and virtue is a somewhat incorrect translation, changing it was necessary. If multiple words are used, the translation for dé could be someone who adheres and lives by the principles of the Dào or the principles of naturalness. I therefore chose dé to be translated as “quiescence,” which is the state of being natural or of non-action.

Non-action 無為

Wúwéi is specifically mentioned eleven times in nine different chapters within the *Dàodéjīng*:

1. Chapter 2, line 3: so, [the] sage dwells [in] the affairs [of] non-action [and] teaches [by] doing [and] not speaking.
2. Chapter 3, line 6: act [through] non-action, thus nothing [is] not managed.
3. Chapter 37, line 1: [the] constant Dào [is] non-action, so nothing [is] not done. [If] feudal lords [and] kings [are] able to abide [by it, then] ten thousand things will [them] selves transform.
4. Chapter 38, line 2: upper quiescence [has] no action, so nothing [has] action, lower quiescence acts, so [it] has action.
5. Chapter 43, line 2: so, I [therefore] know [that] non-action has benefit.
6. Chapter 43, line 3: teaching without words, the benefit [of] non-action, hardly [anything that is] underneath [the] sky [can] catch it.
7. Chapter 48, line 1: [for] study daily increase, [for] Dào daily decrease, decrease [and] decrease until [one] arrives at non-action, non-action, so nothing [is] not done.
8. Chapter 57, line 3: therefore, the sage says: “I [am] non-action, so [the] people [them] selves transform.”
9. Chapter 63, line 1: actions [have] no actions.
10. Chapter 64, line 5: so, the sage [uses] non-action, therefore, nothing fails, [the sage does] not hold [on], therefore, nothing loses.

Wúwéi and its addition wúbùwéi is the cornerstone philosophy of the *Dàodéjīng* and has been translated in many different ways, two examples are: non-action, so no action is not done or use non-action, so you can do anything. I prefer: emptiness [in] action, so nothing [is] not done. The key difference here is that nearly all translations take wú 無 to mean “no” or “non” 不, which is sometimes the way it is used even within the *Dàodéjīng* as a stand-alone character but without the wéi 為 aspect. I propose that the wú 無 in wúwéi 無為 can also mean emptiness (or nothingness), and it does not only need to mean “no/non.” In chapter 11, wú 無 is obviously used as emptiness. There is also the idea of wújí 無極 or utmost emptiness used in chapter 28, line 2, where wú 無 also means emptiness/nothingness. As mentioned above, it appears as though Lǎozǐ’s Dào is that profound, mysterious, abstruse something within emptiness that has produced both the earth and the sky and everything within it.

The cornerstone concept of Lǎozǐ, which is wúwéi (non-action or emptiness in action), follows from this idea of the Dào. Wúwéi therefore has two meanings, firstly, in the action of the mind, it seems to mean stillness, peace and quiet. In action of the body, it means letting nature take its natural course of events and to not interfere.

Lǎozǐ gives many examples of how the sage acts, what he does, and how he manages his affairs. These are all examples of how the sage uses the concept of wúwéi in daily living. The cornerstone of the sage is his non-interference, being natural, and having a kind of stillness. This stillness is not explicitly mentioned as the mind. Lǎozǐ instead seems to describe stillness as an overall state of being.

Stillness, quiet, peacefulness 靜

Lǎozǐ consistently reminds the reader to be still, quiet and peaceful. He talks about these three in the way that they are the natural state of being, and by having this natural state, everything will stabilise and there will be no harm to yourself or others. The key concepts are as follows:

1. Be empty, so you can have stillness (chapter 16, line 1)
2. To return to stillness is to return to a natural state of being (chapter 16, line 2)
3. Stillness is achieved by having no desires (chapter 37, line 4)
4. Following the principles of the female, valley spirit, and mother and one can also achieve stillness (chapter 61, line 2)

Lǎozǐ's use of stillness, quiet, and peacefulness is found in the following chapters and lines:

1. Chapter 16, line 1
2. Chapter 16, line 2
3. Chapter 26, line 1
4. Chapter 35, line 2
5. Chapter 37, line 4
6. Chapter 45, line 3
7. Chapter 61, line 2

The valley, the female, the mother 谷 · 雌 · 母

As the Dào produced everything, Lǎozǐ uses feminine similes such as the valley spirit, the profound female, and the mother to represent it. The key concepts of these female principles are:

- 1) The female is like a valley in the way that everything flows down to it, and from this, it can produce life. To follow and understand the female principle is to be like a ravine, and if you abide by this ravine idea, it is called constant quiescence.
- 2) To have this constant quiescence is to return to the mother or Dào, by which you will achieve longevity.

See Lǎozǐ's use of the valley, the female, and the mother in the following chapter and lines:

1. Chapter 6, line 1
2. Chapter 6, line 2
3. Chapter 10, line 5
4. Chapter 20, line 8
5. Chapter 28, line 1
6. Chapter 28, line 3
7. Chapter 32, line 5
8. Chapter 39, line 1
9. Chapter 52, line 2
10. Chapter 59, line 2
11. Chapter 61, line 1
12. Chapter 61, line 2

Softness 柔弱

Softness is another recurring theme. It can be summed up as follows:

1. As softness is like water, it does not contend (chapter 8, line 1)
2. The breath should be made soft (chapter 10, line 2)

3. Softness can have miraculous benefits (chapter 43, line 1)
4. Softness is like water. It is “strong,” cannot be defeated, and will always defeat the hard (chapter 52, line 4; chapter 78, lines 1 and 2)
5. Softness appears weak but is not (chapter 55, line 3)
6. With softness, one can achieve longevity (chapter 76, lines 1, 2, 3, 5)
7. Softness is better than hardness (chapter 78, line 2)

Nature 自然

The concept of *zìrán* 自然 (nature or natural) is mentioned five times specifically within the *Dàodéjīng*. The main theme of its meaning is as follows:

1. Lǎozǐ calls himself natural and says that he acts naturally (chapter 17, line 4)
2. Nature follows the principle of no excesses (止知) (chapter 23, line 1)
3. The Dào models itself on nature (chapter 25, line 5)
4. The idea of quiescence is the idea of naturalness (chapter 55, line 1)
5. The sage tries to help everyone to be natural (chapter 64, line 7)

The return 歸

The idea of return is a fundamental concept within the *Dàodéjīng* and refers to a return to:

1. Emptiness/nothingness (chapter 14, line 4)
2. Naturalness or the constant (chapter 16, line 2)
3. Root (chapter 16, line 2)
4. Stillness (chapter 16, line 2)
5. Life (chapter 16, line 2)
6. Brightness (chapter 16, line 2)
7. Infant (chapter 28, line 1)
8. Simplicity (chapter 28, line 3)
9. Utmost emptiness (chapter 28, line 2)
10. Quiescence (chapter 60, line 4)
11. Dào (inferred indirectly)

Emptiness 無

The idea of emptiness is another important concept in the *Dàodéjīng* and refers primarily to the Dào and its functioning:

1. Non-action or emptiness in action (see above under non-action)
2. The emptiness of things like rooms and cups (see chapter 11)
3. Emptiness/nothingness (see chapter 14, line 4)
4. The utmost emptiness (see chapter 28)

Simplicity 樸

The idea of simplicity is as follows:

1. Honesty (chapter 15, line 2)
2. An idea or concept to embrace within your own life (chapter 19, line 4)
3. Naturalness (chapter 28, line 3)
4. Something that should not be lost (chapter 28, line 4)
5. Something the Dào has (chapter 32, line 1)
6. A method to overcome desires (chapter 37, lines 2 and 3; chapter 57, line 3)

The constant 常/恒

The *cháng* 常 character is used throughout the *Dàodéjīng*. In the *Mǎwángduī* versions A and B, *cháng* is substituted for *héng* 恒, except for in chapter 16, lines 2 and 3; chapter 52, line 5 and chapter 55, line 5. The only common denominator between these two characters is that they both can mean “constant.” This idea of constant seems to be mutually exchangeable with the words “normal” or “constantly.” This word also appears to be a key that opens up the understanding of the *Dàodéjīng*. It seems that *Lǎozǐ* sees nature’s way as being the norm, therefore, *cháng* could or probably should be translated as “natural,” “naturally,” “nature’s way” or “naturalness.” I originally translated it in this way but took these translations out as a direct translation would still require “constant,” or “constantly.” In chapter 16, line 2, *Lǎozǐ* explicitly explains what *cháng* means: [a] return [to] life [is] called [the] constant, [to the] know [the] constant [is] called brightness. One of the most useful chapters for understanding *cháng* is chapter 55, line 5: crying [the] whole day, yet [he does] not [get a] hoarse voice, [the] most (peak) harmony. [To] know [this] harmony [is] called [the] constant. In this line, “constant” can be understood as something akin to nature’s harmony.

No desire 無欲

One of *Lǎozǐ*’s hallmark techniques for returning (to the *Dào*), living naturally, and managing the people, is to have no desires. *Lǎozǐ*’s use of no desire is as follows:

1. Have no desire to observe the mysteries (chapter 1, line 3)
2. Make the people have no desire, so those with wisdom dare not act (chapter 3, line 5)
3. The *Dào* has no desire (chapter 34, line 3)
4. With the nameless simplicity, there is no desire (chapter 37, line 3)
5. Having no desire, and the people are automatically simple (chapter 57, line 3)

The sage 聖人

The sage is an exemplar figure of someone who has embraced the *Dào*. The key point is that he is a person whom the rulers should model themselves on. *Lǎozǐ* describes him in the following ways:

1. He uses the concept of non-action (chapter 2, line 3; chapter 26, line 2; chapter 47, line 3; chapter 63, line 3; chapter 64, line 5)
2. He teaches others by being an example (chapter 2, line 3)
3. He treats people like straw dogs in the way he lets nature take its course (chapter 5, line 1)
4. He does not live for the self (chapter 7, line 2)
5. He does not live his life by getting attached to the desires that arise from fulfilling the five senses (chapter 12, line 6)
6. He holds onto the one (chapter 22, line 1)
7. He is always helping the people (chapter 26, line 2)
8. He does not harm people (chapter 28, line 4; chapter 60, line 3; chapter 66, line 3)
9. He gets rid of extremes, extravagances and excesses (chapter 29, line 5)
10. He does not stand out from other people (chapter 49, line 1)
11. He helps people to be natural and simple (chapter 49, line 4; chapter 64, line 7)
12. He does not interfere (chapter 57, line 3)
13. He follows the principles of non-action (chapter 57, line 3; chapter 64, line 5)
14. He is balanced in his actions (chapter 58, line 4)
15. The sage takes things to be difficult, so in the end they are not difficult (chapter 63, line 4)
16. He has no desires (chapter 64, line 7)
17. He does not stand out as something special (chapter 70, line 6)
18. The sage has no sickness (chapter 71, line 3)
19. He is not boastful (chapter 72, line 4)
20. He understands the difficulties of life (chapter 73, line 3)

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