

Dao De Jing by Lao Zi

A Minimalist Translation

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Welcome to yet another translation of the Dao De Jing (DDJ), or Tao Te Ching in the old-fashioned spelling. Why should you want to read this translation? This version attempts to include an exact translation of every Chinese symbol in the original text, with as few added words and paraphrasing as possible. This results in sentences which hopefully provide a more literal translation, but are bare and minimalist, sometimes awkward, and often doesn't make sense. You, the reader, will have to wrestle with some sentences, trying to wring out of them whatever meaning their author was trying to express 2300 years ago, instead of my simply telling you what I think they mean. I also show you what words were translated exactly, what was interpreted, and what was added or left out, so you can see exactly how much the English translation has in common with the original Chinese. I even point out alternative translations, so you can choose for yourself in some cases.

Another difference is that while this translation is primarily based on the “Wang Bi” ancient manuscript (used by most translators), it presents some of the ideas from the earliest versions of the DDJ we have available, if those ideas are present in the majority of all the sources.

Finally, scholars have long speculated that different parts of the DDJ were written by different authors at different times. By analyzing the symbols, phrases, and themes in each chapter, the chapters can be separated into at least three groups. The appendix presents the chapters in these groups, so that the reader may better see the common themes each group focused on.

Who Wrote the DDJ and When?

There is a great deal of debate over these questions, enough to fill a book in their own right! What follows is just a very brief introduction for the first-time reader who has no idea who “Lao Zi” was (please note that all dates are very approximate).

Although the author of the DDJ is always given as “Lao Zi” or “Lao Tsu” (old spelling), we have no historical proof of his existence. A Chinese court historian named Sima Qian, who lived around 115 BCE, wrote a biography of Lao Zi (literally “old master”, unless Lao is a family name – in which case “master Lao”) that presents three different possible traditions, although the accuracy of any of them is doubtful. The first says that Lao Zi was a contemporary of Confucius (500 BCE). His family name was Li (“plum”), his given name was Er (“ear”), and he was posthumously called Dan (“long ear”). He was an official in the imperial archives, but when the Zhou dynasty began to decline, he decided to leave China. When he reached the northwest border of China, the border guard asked him to write down his teachings, which resulted in a document of about 5000 characters in two sections. Later in the same document, Sima Qian also speculates that Lao Zi may or may not have been Lao Dan (“old long ear”), an advisor to Duke Xian (370 BCE). Finally, Sima Qian says that a man named Lao Laizi (“old returning master”) authored a Daoist book that had 15 parts, was born in the same province as Lao Zi, and also was a contemporary of Confucius. These three accounts are further complicated by reported meetings between Confucius and someone called Lao Dan in various Confucian texts.

References to the DDJ by other ancient Chinese writers indicate that at least some parts of the DDJ were in existence by 300 BCE, and it was being referred to extensively by 250 BCE. One linguistic analysis of the rhyme schemes indicates that it may have originated as early as 450 BCE, and if the DDJ contains the written version of earlier oral traditions, these rhymes may reflect its oldest origins (because rhymes are easier to memorize). Other references and linguistic analyses place its beginnings around perhaps 375-325 BCE, and the earliest known written portions of it (described in the next section) date to about 300 BCE.

So, some parts of the DDJ seem to have first appeared in written form between roughly 350-300 BCE, although its roots could be much older. It certainly existed in some version of its finished form (roughly 5000 characters in 81 chapters) by 200 BCE.

There is also debate on whether the text represents the work of mostly one author, or was added to by different authors over the course of about a century, or was later compiled from different traditions by one person.

The most recent versions of the DDJ are separated into 81 chapters, and two major parts. The first part, consisting of chapters 1-37, primarily discusses Dao, while chapters 38-81 primarily discuss De. Ancient authors referring to the DDJ also speak of versions that are divided into 64, 68, or 72 chapters.

Different Versions of the DDJ

There are at least six different ancient sources of the text (all dates are approximate) :

“Guodian” (GUO) – discovered in 1993 and written around 300 BCE or slightly earlier, this version matches only about 31 chapters of the later versions of the DDJ, and its chapters are ordered completely differently than the later versions. The Chinese symbols are so ancient that scholars disagree on what modern symbols they should correspond to, and there are occasional spots on the originals where the characters can no longer be read.

“Mawangdui” (MWD) – discovered in 1973, there are two slightly different versions (“A” and “B”), obviously written by two different people, dating to about 200 BCE and 175 BCE respectively. While all 81 chapters are present, both versions reverse the two major parts (“Dao” and “De”) compared to later versions. In addition, the order of a few of the chapters within the parts is different, as is the order of some sections within the chapters! The Chinese symbols are also so ancient that scholars disagree on what modern symbols they should correspond to, and there are many spots where the characters cannot be read.

“Fu Yi” (FY) – Fu Yi was a scholar who lived around 600 CE and claimed that the version he presents and discusses was found in a grave that from his description could possibly be dated to around 200 BCE.

“Wang Bi” (WB) – written around 240 CE, this is the “standard” version that most translators use, although there are several slightly different variations of it.

“He Shang Gong” (HSG) – a legendary and possibly mythical person who may have lived around 170 BCE, but the work which presents and discusses the version of the DDJ associated with him is not mentioned by others until 300 CE. Many scholars think this version was probably written closer to 300 CE and attributed to He Shang Gong to give it authority. There are also many slightly different variations of this text available.

In comparing the six sources, it is easy to see the changes in philosophy of the early Daoists over the centuries. In general, the three earliest versions (GUO, MWD/A, MWD/B) more-or-less agree with each other, the three later versions (FY, WB, HSG) more-or-less agree with each other (despite the tentative dating of FY to 200 BCE), the two groups are often slightly different from each other, and occasionally very different. However, FY does sometimes agree with the three earlier versions. Only the later versions contain the vast majority of criticisms of Confucianism, although even GUO has a few.

WB, HSG, and FY were chosen as sources for this translation mainly because their earliest manuscripts are complete, and the Chinese characters are “modern” enough that there is less doubt as to their meaning. But there are occasional differences between them, so a 2/3 majority vote was used to determine which symbol to use. This would result in a document which is essentially the same as WB, since WB and HSG are almost always the same. However, in comparing all six sources (or fewer if the chapter is not in GUO, or the earlier symbols cannot be read), it becomes obvious that sometimes significant changes were made only in the most recent sources. Thus a symbol was changed to the one used by the older sources if the majority of all available sources use the different symbol, and it adds to the understanding of the sentence. In the case of a tie, the more recent symbol was used. These rules were used for adding or deleting symbols as well.

The Translation Process

There are many reasons why translations differ, besides the problems inherent in translating from a language where : each symbol represents a word that has multiple (sometimes very different) meanings; tenses, articles, and plurals are not indicated; and one symbol can represent either a noun or adjective, another a verb or adverb, another all four!

1. What source is used : for WB and HSG, which version of what source; in the oldest sources, what modern symbols to use
2. Accurately knowing all the possible English meanings for each symbol (and sometimes pairs of symbols), including changes in meaning over the millennia, and understanding ancient idioms
3. Having to pick just one meaning for each symbol
4. Organizing each sentence into something that makes sense, which is helped by understanding something of ancient Chinese grammar

The cultural background, knowledge, biases, beliefs, and agenda of the translator affect every step but the first. “Agenda” refers to how the translator approaches the content of the DDJ : as a work of mysticism vs. philosophy vs. military strategy vs. advice to emperors, etc.

The goals for this translation were :

- Include an English word or phrase for every Chinese symbol in the sentence
- Use exact translations of the Chinese symbols wherever possible
- Minimal interpretation of individual symbols, only where needed for clarity
- Use the same English word(s) for the same symbol(s) when appropriate
- As few added English words as possible to make it a correct English sentence
- No interpretation of the final translated sentence

Individual symbols are interpreted only when they either don't make as much sense literally, or the resulting sentence would be awkward in English. In some cases, if a symbol means two English words that both seem to fit equally well, they are combined into one phrase, such as “heart/mind” for 心 (see the next section), or 玄 which can mean “mystery”, “profound”, “deep”, or “dark”, and is consistently translated as “deep and mysterious” or “deep mystery”, depending on the context.

The above goals hopefully help minimize, but cannot eliminate, translator bias. The problem is that each Chinese symbol still has several meanings, and the translator must pick just one for each symbol (step 3) to create an English sentence that makes sense (step 4). It is impossible to avoid translator bias here because the translator must choose what makes sense or feels right to them, in both word meanings and overall grammar.

For example, there is a line in chapter 58 : 禍兮福之所倚 where 兮 can mean “good fortune” or “happiness” and 禍 can mean “misfortune” or “disaster”, but by reflection with 兮 could also be interpreted as “unhappiness”. 倚 can mean “lean on”, “rely on”, or “depend on”, so all of these are valid translations :

- Misfortune is that which good fortune leans on.
- Misfortune is that which good fortune relies on.
- Misfortune is that which good fortune depends on.
- Unhappiness is that which happiness leans on.
- Unhappiness is that which happiness relies on.
- Unhappiness is that which happiness depends on.

Beyond the differences between using “fortune” (less personal : what happens to you) versus “happiness” (more personal : how you feel), there are also subtle differences : saying that one “relies” on the other is different than saying that they mutually support each other (as possibly indicated by the sentence following this one, not shown here).

Unlike the previous example, where the different translations for each symbol are more-or-less related, sometimes the choice the translator makes can affect the overall meaning or even the emotional impact of the sentence. In chapter 20, there is a line : 我獨若遺 in which the last symbol can be variously translated into :

I alone seem lost.

I alone seem to have lost everything.

I alone seem to have been left behind.

I alone seem to be forgotten.

Each of which says a completely different thing.

And in chapter 46, there is a line : 罪莫大於可欲 where the first symbol can mean any of : “sin”, “crime”, “vice”, or “fault”, so (ignoring options for the other symbols), all of these are valid :

There is no sin greater than the capacity for desire.

There is no crime greater than the capacity for desire.

There is no vice greater than the capacity for desire.

There is no fault greater than the capacity for desire.

“Sin” of course has very negative religious connotations in the West, while “crime” and “vice” also have stronger negative associations than “fault”.

But there are other, even more significant ways in which the translator’s choices affect the result. Because of the many (sometimes unrelated) possible meanings of each Chinese symbol, it is possible to come up with multiple translations of the exact same sentence that are completely different in meaning! For example, in chapter 41, there is a line : 大方無隅 where 方 can mean both “region” and “square”, while 隅 can be “border” or “corner”, so both of these are valid translations :

The greatest region is without borders.

The greatest square is without corners.

And in chapter 45 : 大巧若拙 where 巧 can be “skillful” or “clever”, and 拙 can mean “stupid” or “clumsy”, both of these are equally likely :

Great skillfulness seems clumsy.

Great cleverness seems stupid.

Finally, even when there is no ambiguity about the meaning of the individual symbols, it sometimes hard to determine what overall meaning was intended. From chapter 35, there is a line : 道之出言淡兮 in which the first four symbols literally mean “words of Dao”, but does this mean “talking about Dao” or “the words that come out of Dao”? It can be argued both ways due to subtleties in the meanings of the symbols, but there is a tremendous difference in meaning between the two translations.

In addition, there are a few symbols whose modern English meanings just don’t make sense within the context of the sentence, probably due either to transcription errors or changes in meaning over the millennia. The English words used for these symbols are usually selected according to context.

Common Terms

Because the translation itself is meant to involve minimal interpretation and explanation, some of the words and phrases that are used repeatedly need to be discussed beforehand for clarity. Keep in mind that volumes have been written about some of these concepts – these are just brief summaries for the reader new to Daoism.

道 Dao : most often translated as the “way”; according to various passages in the DDJ, Dao appears to be the way of nature (or the universe), the process of being in harmony with that way, the source that creates and nourishes all things, and absolute ultimate reality itself (and according to the opening lines of the first chapter, this description is completely inadequate); it is left untranslated so that readers may “fill in the blank” for

themselves as they read; “the Dao” is used as little as possible because in English that implies that Dao is more of a thing than a process; Dao is sometimes referred to as “it” to avoid awkward grammar (or if it was written that way in the original Chinese), but do not think of Dao as a noun (just for fun sometime, try reading “Dao” as “Daoing”...); one exception is when “Dao of” is used (for example, “the Dao of heaven”) – this seems to be literally referring to the way heaven does things, so it is translated as “the Way of heaven”, but “Way” is capitalized to remind the reader that this is also Dao; similarly, “this Dao” seems to be referring more to “this way (of following Dao), and is translated “this Way”

德 De : most often translated as “virtue”, “integrity”, or “(inner) power”, De is described in chapter 49 as “goodness” or “virtue” and “honesty” or “trust”; De might be infused into things when they are created by/from Dao, or something that develops when Dao is fully expressed through a person; De seems to be both the quality of being virtuous and the power that comes from being virtuous, so it might best be thought of as “the power of one’s virtue” or “the power from one’s integrity”, but it is also left untranslated so that readers may “fill in the blank” for themselves as they read

天 “heaven” : a complex concept, this symbol seems to have connotations of the sky, nature (including people and societies), that which controls our destinies, as well as possibly that of a celestial god-like spirit (and/or perhaps ancestral spirits)

天地 “heaven and earth” : everything, the universe, all that is

天下 “the world” : literally “heaven under”, it is perhaps better thought of as “all things under heaven”; it is left as “the world” because the English grammar sometimes gets awkward using the more accurate phrase; some translate it as “the empire”, which gives the entire document a much more imperialistic and militaristic slant

萬物 “ten thousand creatures” : “ten thousand” as used here does not refer to a specific number, but means “innumerable” or “myriad”; together the symbols are perhaps better thought of as “all creatures and things”

聖人 “sage” : literally “holy man”; in the DDJ, a sage is anyone who fully embodies and expresses Dao and De; as the ruling class would have been one of the few literate groups in ancient Chinese culture reading the DDJ, it seems possible that references to the way the sage does things could have also been a subtle way of saying “this is what a wise ruler would do” (especially in chapters like 5, 57, and 66, where the sage seems to be the ruler)

常 “ever-constant” : while this is often translated as “eternal”, it probably had more of a sense of “constant” or “permanent” in ancient China; unfortunately “constant” doesn’t imply the enduring nature of “permanent”, nor does “permanent” imply the unchanging quality of “constant”, so “ever-constant” is used here

心 “heart/mind” : usually translated as either “heart” or “mind” (the symbol means both), “heart/mind” seems to be the best translation

自然 “naturally so” : this has the connotation of something that happens spontaneously, without being forced (“of itself”, “of its own accord”, “on its own”); Dao is “naturally so”, and although the DDJ does not say so explicitly, presumably the sage acts “naturally so” as well

樸 “uncarved block” (of wood) : just as a block of wood can be carved into virtually anything, in the DDJ the “uncarved block” represents the limitless undefined potential of our original nature

無為 “non-action” : not passivity or lack of action, but spontaneous action taken at the proper time according to the situation

無事 “non-interference” : to change the natural order of things as little as possible in achieving your goals

無知 “without-knowledge” : not an absence of knowledge, but a kind of understanding that does not resort to pre-conceived ideas or rules

無名 “without-name” : a reminder that things, concepts, and experiences are far more than the names we give them and ultimately cannot be described with words (in contrast to the Confucians, whose goal was to find the “correct name” for everything)

無欲 “without-desire” : not a total lack of desire, but desires that do not control us or our happiness; a sort of spontaneous, unattached desire

無 or 無有 “non-being” : the nameless absolute that is the source of all existence (“being”)

爭 “strive” : to struggle or make vigorous effort to achieve something, perhaps competing against others to get it; the opposite of non-action

陰 “yin” : the feminine principle; receptive, yielding, dark, cool, soft

陽 “yang” : the masculine principle; aggressive, active, light, warm, hard

氣 “qi” (ch’i, chi) : vitality, life energy, life force, vital energy

善 “virtue” : the traditional sense of moral virtue and goodness

靜 “stillness” : a mental/emotional stillness of the heart/mind

谷 “valley” : the image of the valley is often used in the DDJ; a valley represents receptiveness (because it accepts all things that come into it), openness, and emptiness, and so is feminine in nature

身 “self” : often translated as “body” by others (it can mean either), it is my personal bias that this symbol seems to consistently refer to the sense-of-self, personality, or ego

復 or 歸 or 復歸 or 反 “returning” : the DDJ uses four different symbols to refer to the concept of returning, and it is used many times; beyond the everyday meaning, in the DDJ creatures and people often return to their source, true nature, or original state of pure and unformed potential; sometimes they just “return”, and from where or to where is not specified

明 “insight” : an intuitive, without-knowledge, understanding of what is; this is another personal bias – while the literal translations include “wise”, “clear”, “understanding”, “perceptive”, and “sight”, it seems that this symbol can be consistently interpreted as “insight” (which is in agreement with the literal translations); in addition, it is variously translated by other modern translators as “enlightenment” and even “insight”

事 “duties” : one’s personal and business affairs, responsibilities, etc.

吾 “I” : on the rare occasions this is used, think of this as someone who is a sage-like Daoist rather than merely “the author”

百姓 “100 families” : in ancient times this phrase referred to the entire ruling class

士 “scholar” : around the time of the DDJ, this referred to the elite “intellectual” class of Chinese society, the teachers and philosophers (Confucius would have been considered a scholar)

君 “ruler”, 王 “king”, etc. : there are many symbols and euphemisms for various members of the nobility (“nobles”, “superiors”, “master of the people”, “son of heaven”, “master of 10,000 chariots”, etc.)

貴 “high rank” : any position of power or admiration

While the DDJ is over 2000 years old, its wisdom is still applicable today, but don't be fooled by the ancient wording! "King" could today apply to anyone who runs things, manages others, or leads any kind of group (from the nation's leader to a corporation CEO to...your boss), and "high rank" could apply to government officials, billionaires, or even movie stars.

There are also many Confucian terms used in the DDJ :

- 仁 "kindness" : being benevolent, kindhearted, humane
- 義 "righteousness" (translated as "morality" to avoid religious associations) : having a sense of justice, doing the right thing, being morally upright
- 禮 "propriety" : ritual courtesy and formality; proper etiquette
- 智 "wise", "wisdom" : as it says
- 信 "truth", "trust", "honest" : as it says
- 忠 "loyalty" : as it says
- 勇 "courage", "brave" : as it says
- 廉 "honorable" : having a sense of honor or integrity; incorruptibility
- 孝 "filial piety" (translated as "devoted children") : respect your elders and parents, duty to your parents, care for the elderly
- 慈 "compassion" : benevolence, mercy; as specifically applied to parents' attitude towards their children, this is translated as "loving parents"
- 君子 "noble man" : literally "son of the ruler", this can mean "nobleman" (one who belongs to the nobility), but is also a Confucian term that means one who is noble or moral in character and embodies the above qualities; sometimes translated by others as "gentleman" or "superior man"

Many symbols in the DDJ are used to provide emphasis (similar to an exclamation point in English), and can either come at the end of a sentence or can be used to emphasize a word or phrase in the middle of a sentence. Many translators ignore these latter symbols entirely, while others preface the emphasized word with "so...", "such...", "very...", "oh,..." , etc. Here, an exclamation point is used immediately after the word, but then the sentence continues on. One symbol in particular implies that what precedes it is not only true but has always been true, which is translated as "indeed!"

References

Introduction :

Laozi, by Alan Chan; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/laozi/>; 2009

Translations :

Dao De Jing : A Philosophical Translation, by Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall; Ballantine, New York; 2003 (*note that this is a translation of the MWD sources*)

Lao Zi zhi Dao De Jing : Two Literal English Translations, by Bradford Hatcher;
<http://www.hermetica.info/LaoziA.htm>; 2005

Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, by D.C. Lau; Penguin Books, London; 1963 (*this is a reasonably literal translation, with minimal interpretation; note that his 1994 book is an MWD translation*)

The Way and Its Power, by Arthur Waley; Grove Press, New York; 1958

These were mostly used for their own explanations of the more difficult passages and ancient Chinese idioms, but were sometimes used for comparison during the translation process.

Ancient Chinese Sources :

Comparisons of Chinese Versions, by Nina Carerra; <http://www.daoisopen.com/Comparisons.html>;
2005

These charts were used to compare the symbols between all sources, and for end-of-sentence and end-of-chapter markers. I personally verified the WB symbols in these charts against several different references.

Key to Notations

<u>Symbols used for the translation</u>	<u>The final English translation</u>
<p>• = end-of-line character appears in some source</p> <p>(•) = symbol usually starts or ends a line</p> <p>Of the 6 ancient sources (see Introduction), this translation uses WB except where the majority of the other sources disagree with it. The notations for these changes are :</p> <p>() = WB symbol has been changed</p> <p>__ = WB symbol has been deleted</p> <p>[] = symbol not in WB has been added</p>	<p>Sections separated by blank lines are the opinion of the translator.</p>
<p><u>Raw translation</u></p> <p><u>underline</u> = verbatim translation</p> <p><i>italics</i> = interpreted translation; exact translation is to the far right in <u>[brackets]</u></p> <p><u><i>underlined italics</i></u> = combined literal meanings from one symbol</p> <p><u>underline</u>² or <i>italics</i>² or <u><i>underlined italics</i></u>² = 2 symbols used to provide translation</p> <p>{ <u>word</u> } = equally likely translation of single symbol</p> <p>[<u>word</u>] = symbol left out for grammatical clarity</p> <p>[word] = word added for clarity that significantly influences the meaning of the sentence</p> <p>word* = Confucian concept</p> <p>word^o = untranslatable; word is chosen for consistency</p> <p>◆ = all symbols in the sentence are the same in all or all but one of the sources (sentence is identical or essentially identical across all sources); this does <u>not</u> account for different symbols with the same meaning!</p>	<p><u>Footnotes and cross-references</u></p> <p>Differences between the sources are sometimes noted, but not every difference is noted.</p> <p>Footnotes in <i>italics</i> provide my own possible interpretations of the more difficult passages, which you may certainly ignore!</p>

Chapter One

• 道可道非常道 •
 名可名非常名 •
 無名天地之始 •
 有名萬物之母 •
 (•) 故常無欲以觀其妙 •
 常有欲以觀其徼
 此兩者同出而異名
 同謂之玄
 玄之又玄
 眾妙之門

The Dao that can be spoken of is not the ever-constant Dao.
 The name that can be named is not the ever-constant name.
 That which is without-name is the beginning of heaven and earth.

That which possesses a name is the mother of the ten thousand creatures.

Therefore : always without-desire, thus you observe its subtle mystery.

Always possessing desires, thus you observe its external appearances.

These two, they arise from the same source but have different names;

This sameness is called their deep mystery.

Deep mysteries, and again deep mysteries –
 The gateway of many subtle mysteries.

◆The Dao that can be spoken of is not the ever-constant Dao.
 ◆The name that can be named is not the ever-constant name.
 [That which] is without-name is the beginning of heaven and earth.^A
 ◆[That which] possesses a name is the mother of the ten thousand creatures.
Therefore : always without-desire, thus you observe its subtle mystery.
Always possessing desires, thus you observe its external appearances. [boundary,surface]
These two, they arise from the same [source]^B but have different names;
 This sameness is called their deep mystery.
 ◆Deep mysteries, [→] and again deep mysteries –
 The gateway of many subtle mysteries.

Notes :

A : this line and the next may just as likely be translated as
Non-being is named as the beginning of heaven and earth.

Being is named as the mother of the ten thousand creatures.

either way, compare to #40, where the world and the ten thousand creatures are created from being

B : literally, “they have the same arising”

Cross-references :

without-name : #32, #37, #41

mother : #20, #25, #52, #59

always/ever-constantly without X : #32, #34, #37

without-desire : #3, #34, #37, #57

mystery : #6, #10, #15, #27, #51, #56, #62, #65

mysterious sameness : #56

gateway : #6, #10, #52, #56

Chapter Two

天下皆知美之為美斯惡已。
 皆知善之為善斯不善已。
 (•)故有無相生。
 難易相成。
 長短相較。
 高下相傾。
 音聲相和。
 前後相隨。
 是以聖人
 處無為之事
 行不言之教
 萬物作一而不(始)。
 生而不有
 為而不恃。
 功成而弗居。
 (•)夫唯弗居。
 是以不去。

In the world, when all know that the action of beauty is beautiful, then ugliness ensues.
 When all know that the action of good is goodness, then not-good ensues.

Therefore : being and non-being create each other,
 Difficult and easy complete each other,
 Long and short contrast each other,
 High and low lean on each other,
 Tone and voice harmonize each other,
 Before and after follow each other.

Thus the sage :
 Lives by using non-action in his duties,
 And practicing no-talking in his teachings.

The ten thousand creatures arise, but do not have a beginning.
 Creating but not possessing;
 Acting, but not concerned with the results;
 Accomplishing tasks, but not dwelling on them.

Now : only because there is no dwelling,
 Thus the results do not depart.

In the world², when all know that the action of beauty is beautiful, then ugliness^o{evil} ensues.
[thereafter, afterwards]
 When all know that the action of good is goodness, then not-good ensues.
[thereafter, afterwards]
Therefore : being and non-being create each other,^A
Difficult and easy complete each other,
Long{lasting} and short{brief} contrast^B each other,
[forever] [compare]
High{above} and low{below} lean on each other,^C
Tone and voice{sound} harmonize each other,
Before{front} and after{back} follow each other.
Thus² the sage² :
Lives by [using] non-action in his duties,
 And practicing no-talking in his teachings. [performs]
 The ten thousand creatures arise, but do not have a beginning.
Creating but not possessing,^D
 ♦Acting, but not concerned with [the results];
[depend upon, rely upon]
Accomplishing tasks, but not dwelling on them.
[results, achievements]
Now : only because there is no dwelling,
 ♦Thus² [the results] do not depart.

Notes

A : compare to #40, where non-being creates being
 B : FY, MWD, and GUO all have different words here (for example : “shape”, “form”, “mold”, etc.)
 C : compare to #39, where low is the foundation of high
 D : this line is missing in the earliest three sources; there is no indication in the original Chinese as to whether it is the sage or the creatures that are the ones acting in this and the following lines, so it is left ambiguous here as well

Cross-references

beauty *and* ugly : #20
 non-being : #40, #43
 tone *and* voice/sound (same symbol) : #41
 non-action : #3, #37, #38, #43, #48, #57, #63, #64
 sage practices non-action : #43
 teaching : #27, #42, #43
 no-talking in his teachings : #43
 creates but does not possess : #10, #51
 acting but not concerned : #10, #51, #77
 accomplishing tasks : #9, #17, #34, #77
 and not dwelling on them : #9, #77

Chapter Three

<p>不尚賢 使民不爭 不貴難得之貨 使民不為盜 不見可欲 使民心不亂。 是以聖人之治。 虛其心實其腹 弱其志強其骨 常使民無知無欲。 使夫智者不敢為。 為無為則無不治 [矣(•)]。</p>	<p>Not honoring those who are esteemable Ensures that the citizens do not strive. Not valuing rare goods Ensures that the citizens do not act like thieves. Not showing that which can be desired Ensures that the citizens' heart/minds do not become confused.</p> <p>Thus the governing of the sage Empties their heart/minds, fills their stomachs, Weakens their ambitions, strengthens their bones.</p> <p>By always ensuring that the citizens are without-knowledge and without-desire, Those who make men wise will not dare to act.</p> <p>Act with non-action, then all will be governed!</p>
<p><u>Not honoring</u> [those who are] <i>esteemable</i> [virtuous,talented] Ensures that the <u>citizens</u> do <u>not strive</u>. [cause,make] ◆<u>Not valuing rare</u>² [->] <u>goods</u> Ensures that the <u>citizens</u> do <u>not act</u> like <u>thieves</u>. [cause,make] <u>Not showing</u> [that which] <u>can be desired</u> Ensures that the <u>citizens'</u> <u>heart/minds</u> do <u>not become</u> <u>confused</u>. [cause,make] ◆<u>Thus</u>² the <u>governing of</u> the <u>sage</u>² ◆<u>Empties their heart/minds</u>^A, <u>fills</u>^o <u>their stomachs</u>, ◆<u>Weakens their ambitions, strengthens their bones</u>. ◆By <u>always ensuring</u> that the <u>citizens</u> are <u>without-knowledge</u> and <u>without-desire</u>, [cause,make] <u>Those who make men wise</u>^{*B} will <u>not dare to act</u>. <u>Act with non-action, then all</u>² will be <u>governed</u> !</p>	<p><u>Notes</u> A : <i>presumably of striving, greed, and confusion</i> B : <i>presumably referring to Confucians</i>; earlier sources use the non-Confucian term “knowledgeable” instead of “wise”</p> <p><u>Cross-references</u> no striving : #8, #22, #66, #68, #73, #81 rare goods : #12, #64 without-desire : #1, #34, #37, #57 weak : #29, #36, #40, #55, #76, #78 strong : #29, #30, #33, #36, #52, #55, #67, #78 not daring to act : #64, #67, #69 non-action : #2, #37, #38, #43, #48, #57, #63, #64 act with non-action : #63 anti-Confucian : #18, #19, #27, #33, #38</p>

Chapter Four

道 (虛) 而用之 (有) 不盈 •
 淵兮似萬物之宗 •
 挫其銳 •
 解其紛 •
 和其光
 同其塵
 湛兮似或存 •
 吾不知誰之子 •
 象帝之先 •

Dao is like a cup or bowl, yet use it and there exists no need to fill it.
 Profound and deep!, it appears to be the ancestor of the ten thousand creatures.

It blunts their sharpness,
 Loosens their tangles,
 Softens their brightness,
 Makes them the same as the dust of the world.

Deep and profound!, it seems to barely exist.
 I do not know whose child it is –
 Its image came before that of god.

Dao is like a cup or bowl^A, yet use it and there exists no [need to] fill it.

Profound and deep !, it appears to be the ancestor of the ten thousand creatures.

It blunts their sharpness, [dampens,subdues]

◆Loosens their tangles,^B

◆Softens their brightness,^C

◆Makes them the same as the dust of the world^D.

Deep and profound !, it seems to barely exist.^E

[might,maybe,perhaps]

I do not know whose [→] child it is –

◆Its image came before that of god{emperor}.

Notes

A : while the symbol used here only appears in one out of four sources, it gives the most straightforward translation; *Dao is like a cup in that its usefulness is in its emptiness* (see #11 and #25)

B : this line could just as likely be translated as

Clarifies their confusion

C : compare to #58, where the sage is bright but does not dazzle

D : *according to Waley, “dust” is a metaphor for the “noise and fuss of everyday life”*

E : compare to #6, where the spirit of the valley also “seems to exist”

Cross-references

use does not exhaust : #5, #35

blunt the sharpness : #56

loosen the tangles : #56

soften the brightness : #56

dust of the world : #56

Chapter Six

谷神不死
是謂玄牝
玄牝之門
是謂天地(之)根。
綿綿若存
用之不勤

The spirit of the valley does not die –
It is called the deep and mysterious feminine.

The gateway of this deep and mysterious feminine –
It is called the source of heaven and earth.

Unbroken, it seems to exist.
Using it takes no effort.

◆The spirit of the valley does not die^A –
It is called the *deep and mysterious feminine*.
The gateway of this *deep and mysterious feminine* –
It is called the source of heaven and earth.
Unbroken², it seems to exist.^B
Using it takes no effort. [diligence,hard work]

Notes

A : *the qualities (“spirit”) of a valley (receptiveness, openness, emptiness) never leave it*

B : compare to #4, where Dao also “seems to barely exist”

Cross-references

die/death : #33, #42, #50, #67, #74, #75, #76, #80

valley : #15, #28, #32, #39, #41, #66

mystery : #1, #10, #15, #27, #51, #56, #62, #65

feminine : #10, #28, #61

gateway : #1, #10, #52, #56

Chapter Eleven

三十輻共一轂
 當其無有車之用•
 埴埴以為器
 當其無有器之用•
 鑿戶牖以為室
 當其無有室之用•
 (•)故有之以為利
 無之以為用•

Thirty spokes of a wheel share one hub;
 In its emptiness exists the usefulness of the cart.

Mix water with clay thus making a vessel;
 In its emptiness exists the usefulness of the vessel.

Cut out doors and windows thus making a room;
 In their emptiness exists the usefulness of the room.

Therefore : what exists thus makes a thing profitable;
 Emptiness thus makes it useful.

Thirty² spokes of a wheel share one hub;
 ♦In its emptiness exists the usefulness of the cart. [just at]
Mix water with clay² thus making a vessel;
In its emptiness exists the usefulness of the vessel. [just at]
Cut out doors and windows thus making a room{house};
 [chisel,bore,pierce]
 ♦In their emptiness exists the usefulness of the
room{house}. [just at]
 ♦Therefore : what exists thus makes a thing profitable; [it]
 ♦Emptiness thus makes it useful.

Notes

Cross-references

Chapter Twelve

五色令人目盲。
 五音令人耳聾。
 五味令人口爽。
 馳騁畋獵令人心發狂。
 難得之貨令人行妨。
 是以聖人。
 為腹不為目。
 (•)故去彼取此。

The five colors can make people's eyes blind.
 The five tones can make people's ears deaf.
 The five flavors can make people's mouths dull.
 Excessive hunting and horse racing can make people's
 heart/minds become wild.
 Rare goods can make people's behavior corrupt.

Thus the sage :
 Acts on what is inside, he does not act on what he sees.
 Therefore he leaves that and chooses this.

♦The five colors [can] make people's eyes blind.
 The five tones [can] make people's ears deaf.
 The five flavors [can] make people's mouths dull.
Excessive hunting and horse racing [can] make people's
heart/minds become wild. [hunt hunt] [gallop²]
 Rare² [→] goods [can] make people's behavior corrupt.
 [undermine,harm,impede]
 Thus² the sage² :
Acts on what is inside, he does not act on what he sees.^A
Therefore he leaves that^B and chooses this^C.

Notes
 Everything in the first five lines would have been enjoyed
 to excess only by the wealthy and the ruling class!
 A : compare to #49, where the 100 families "follow their
 eyes"
 B : *presumably, acting on what he sees*
 C : *presumably, acting on what is inside*

Cross-references
 rare goods : #3, #64
 leaves that and chooses this : #38, #72

Chapter Thirteen

寵辱若驚
 貴大患若身。
 何謂寵辱若驚
 寵為下得之若驚
 失之若驚。
 是謂寵辱若驚
 何謂貴大患若身
 吾所以有大患者為吾有身。
 及吾無身吾有何患(●)
 (●)故貴以身為天下。
 若可[以]寄天下[矣(●)]。
 愛以身為天下
 若可[以]託天下[矣(●)]。

Favor and disgrace seem alarming.
 High rank brings great suffering if you have a self.

What is meant by “favor and disgrace seem alarming”?
 Favor makes you the inferior, so gaining it seems alarming.
 Losing it also seems alarming.
 This is what is meant by “favor and disgrace seem alarming”.

What is meant by “high rank brings great suffering if you have a self”?
 I am the reason that I have great suffering, I who act like I have a self.
 When I am without a self, how could I have suffering?

Therefore : he who is high ranking and uses his self to serve the world –
 It seems he can thus be entrusted with the world!
 He who is loving and uses his self to serve the world –
 It seems he can thus be entrusted with the world!

◆Favor and disgrace seem alarming.
 ◆High rank brings great suffering if you have a self.
 What is meant by “favor and disgrace seem alarming”?
 Favor makes you the inferior^A, so gaining it seems alarming.
 ◆Losing it [also] seems alarming.
 This is what is meant by “favor and disgrace seem alarming”.
 What is meant by “high rank brings great suffering if you have a self”?
 ◆I am the reason that² I have great suffering, I who act like I have a self.
 When I am without a self, how could I have suffering?
 Therefore : [he who] is high ranking and uses his self^B to serve the world² –
 It seems he can thus be entrusted with the world² !
 ◆[He who] is loving and uses his self to serve the world² –
 It seems he can thus be entrusted with the world² !

Notes
 A : Ames&Hall point out that “favor” here means something that is bestowed upon you by a superior at their whim, thus it emphasizes your inferiority to them; and since it could be taken away just as easily, merely gaining it is cause for “alarm” (worry, anxiety, etc.)
 B : this is written in this awkward manner to emphasize that it is the personality or sense-of-self that is being talked about (in the translator’s opinion – see the Introduction and cross-references below)

Cross-references
 self : #7, #9, #16, #26, #44, #52, #54, #66
 serve the world : #39, #49

Chapter Fourteen

<p>視之不見名曰夷 聽之不聞名曰希 搏之不得名曰微。 此三者不可致詰。 (•)故混而為一 [一者] 其上不皦。 其下不昧。 繩繩[兮]不可名。 復歸於無物。 是謂無狀之狀 無物之象 是謂惚恍 迎之不見其首 隨之不見其後 執古之道 以御今之有。 能知古始 是謂道紀</p>	<p>Look, it is not seen; its name is called elusive. Listen, it is not heard; its name is called tenuous. Grasp, it is not gotten; its name is called subtle and obscure. These three things can not be investigated any further – Therefore they blend and become one.</p> <p>This one thing : Its highest point is not bright; Its lowest point is not dark. Continuous and unending!, it can not be named; It returns to non-existence. It is called the form of that which is without-form; The image of non-existence. It is called confusing and indistinct. Meet it and you do not see its beginning; Follow it and you do not see its end.</p> <p>Hold fast to the Way of the ancients In order to master the present moment. The ability to know the ancient beginning – This is called the main principle of Dao.</p>
<p><u>Look, it is not seen</u>; its <u>name is called elusive</u>^o. <u>Listen, it is not heard</u>; its <u>name is called tenuous</u>. [rare] <u>Grasp, it is not gotten</u>; its <u>name is called subtle and obscure</u>. <u>These three things can not be investigated any further</u> – [entities] [finer,closer] ◆Therefore they <u>blend and become one</u>. <u>This one thing</u> :^A [entity] <u>Its highest point is not bright</u>; <u>Its lowest point is not dark</u>. <u>Continuous and unending</u>² !, it <u>can not be named</u>; ◆It <u>returns</u>² to <u>non-existence</u>. [thing-ness] <u>It is called the form of</u> [that which] is <u>without-form</u>; ◆The <u>image of non-existence</u>. [thing-ness] <u>It is called confusing and indistinct</u>.^B <u>Meet it and you do not see its beginning</u>; <u>Follow it and you do not see its end</u>. [back,rear] <u>Hold fast to the Way of the ancients</u> <u>In order to master the present moment</u>³. [control,manage] [present 's existence] <u>The ability to know the ancient beginning</u> – <u>This is called the main principle</u>^C of <u>Dao</u>. [discipline]</p>	<p><u>Notes</u> A : Only WB and HSG dropped this line B : compare to #21, where Dao is also confusing and indistinct, and to #40, where Dao specifically “returns” and “weakens” C : according to Waley, 紀 literally means “main thread” (as in “of the teaching”), so “principle” seems more appropriate than the modern definition of simply “discipline”</p> <p><u>Cross-references</u> look, not seen <i>and</i> listen, not heard : #35 tenuous : #41 returning : #16, #19, #20, #22, #25, #28, #34, #40, #52, #58, #60, #64, #65, #80 confusing <i>and</i> indistinct : #21 the ancients/elders : #15, #22, #38, #39, #62, #65, #68</p>

Chapter Fifteen

<p>古之善為士者微妙玄通 深不可識。 (•)夫唯不可識 (•)故強為之容。 豫兮若冬涉川。 猶兮若畏四鄰。 儼兮其若(客)。 渙兮若冰 將釋。 敦兮其若樸。 曠兮其若谷 混兮其若濁。 孰能濁以靜之徐清。 孰能安以久動之徐生 保此道者不欲盈 (•)夫唯不盈 (是) [以] 能 蔽 [而] 不 成</p>	<p>The virtue of the ancients made them who were scholars subtle, mysterious, obscure, deep, and penetrating. Their mysterious depths can not be understood.</p> <p>Now : only because they can not be understood, Therefore we try to emulate their appearance : Hesitant!, as if crossing a winter stream. Wary!, as if afraid of their neighbors all around. Respectful!, they are like a visiting guest. Yielding!, like ice that is about to break off. Honest and genuine!, they are like the uncarved block. Wide and open!, they are like a valley. Unclear!, they are like muddy water.</p> <p>Who can take muddy water and use stillness to slowly and gently make it pure and clear? Who can take what is tranquil and use continual movement to slowly and gently bring it to life?</p> <p>He who maintains this Way does not desire to be full. Now : only because he is not full, Thus he can be hidden and unfinished.</p>
<p>The <u>virtue of the ancients</u> made <u>them who were scholars</u> <u>subtle, mysterious, obscure, deep, and penetrating</u>⁴. Their <u>mysterious depths can not be understood</u>. <u>Now : only</u> because they <u>can not be understood</u>, <u>Therefore we try to emulate their appearance</u> : [act like, become] <u>Hesitant !, as if crossing a winter stream</u>. <u>Wary !, as if afraid of their neighbors all around</u>. [scheming] <u>Respectful !, they are like a visiting guest</u>. <u>Yielding^o !, like ice that is about to break off</u>. [release, disperse] <u>Honest and genuine !, they are like the uncarved block</u>. <u>Wide and open !, they are like a valley</u>. <u>Unclear !, they are like muddy water</u>.^A [confused, muddy] <u>Who can take muddy water and use stillness to slowly and gently make it pure and clear</u>^B? <u>Who can take what is tranquil and use continual movement to slowly and gently bring it to life?</u> [for a long time] <u>He who maintains this Way does not desire to be full</u>. <u>Now : only</u> because he is <u>not full</u>, <u>Thus² he can be hidden and unfinished</u>². [not finish]</p>	<p><u>Notes</u> The last two lines are not present in GUO A : in this sentence and the next, “muddy water” appears to be a metaphor for one’s state of mind, thus referring to churned-up thoughts and feelings B : apparently referring to a purity and clarity of the heart/mind</p> <p><u>Cross-references</u> the ancients/elders : #14, #22, #38, #39, #62, #65, #68 virtue of the ancients : #65 scholar : #41, #68 mystery : #1, #6, #10, #27, #51, #56, #62, #65 fear/afraid : #17, #20, #72, #74 uncarved block : #19, #28, #32, #37, #57 valley : #6, #28, #32, #39, #41, #66 stillness : #16, #26, #37, #45, #57, #61 he who “possesses Dao” : #23, #24, #31, #65, #77 hidden : #41</p>

Chapter Sixteen

致虛極•
 守靜篤•
 萬物並作
 吾以觀[其]復•
 (●)夫物芸芸各復歸其根•
 歸根曰靜
 [靜]是謂復命
 復命曰常•
 知常曰明•
 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

Attain the utmost emptiness.
 Maintain a profound stillness.

The ten thousand creatures arise in unison,
 And thus I observe their return.
 Now : all the myriad creatures return to their source.
 Returning to the source speaks of stillness.
 Stillness is called returning to the natural order.
 Returning to the natural order speaks of the ever-constant.

Knowing the ever-constant speaks of insight.
 Not knowing the ever-constant is foolish and creates
 misfortune.

Knowing the ever-constant leads to tolerance.
 Being tolerant leads to being just and unbiased.
 Being just and unbiased leads to being kingly.
 Being kingly leads to heaven.
 Heaven leads to Dao.
 Dao leads to what endures.

When the self disappears, there can be no danger.

Attain the utmost emptiness.
Maintain a profound stillness. [sincere,devoted,true]
 The ten thousand creatures arise in unison,
 [together,simultaneously]
 And thus I observe their return.
 Now : all the myriad creatures return² to their source.
 [multitudinous²]
Returning to the source speaks of stillness.
Stillness is called returning to the natural order.
 [order,destiny,fate]
Returning to the natural order speaks of the ever-constant.
 [order,destiny,fate]
Knowing the ever-constant speaks of insight. [wise,sight]
Not knowing the ever-constant is foolish and creates
misfortune. [arise,makes] [unfortunate,evil]
 ♦Knowing the ever-constant [leads to] tolerance.
 [allow,permit,forbear]
 ♦Being tolerant leads to being just and unbiased.
 [allow,permit,forbear] [thereupon,consequently]
 ♦Being just and unbiased leads to being kingly.
 [thereupon,consequently]
 ♦Being kingly leads to heaven. [thereupon,consequently]
 ♦Heaven leads to Dao. [thereupon,consequently]
 ♦Dao leads to what endures.
 [thereupon,consequently] [for a long time]
 ♦When the self disappears, there can be no danger.

Notes
 Only the first five lines of the entire chapter are present in
 GUO

Cross-references
 stillness : #15, #26, #37, #45, #57, #61
 returning : #14, #19, #20, #22, #25, #28, #34, #40, #52,
 #58, #60, #64, #65, #80
 knowing the ever-constant speaks of insight : #55
 self : #7, #9, #13, #26, #44, #52, #54, #66
 no danger : #25, #32, #44, #52
 when the self disappears, there can be no danger : #52

Chapter Seventeen

太上下知有之
 其次親而譽之
 其次畏之
 其次侮之
 信不足焉有不信 —
 (猶) 兮其貴言 •
 功成事遂
 百姓皆謂我自然 •

The existence of the best ruler is barely known to the people.
 Next is one who they love and praise.
 Next is one who they fear.
 Next is one who they ridicule.

 If the ruler does not trust enough, then he will not have anyone's trust.

 Thoughtful!, he values his words.

 When tasks are accomplished and duties are successful, The 100 families all say “we are naturally so”.

The existence of the *best ruler*^{2A} [he] is barely known [to the people]. [highest superior] [below, inferior]
Next is *one* who they love and praise. [him]
 ♦Next is *one* who they fear. [him]
Next is *one* who they ridicule. [him]
 If [the ruler] does not trust* enough, then he will not have anyone's trust*.
Thoughtful !, he values his words.^B [scheming]
 When *tasks* are accomplished and duties are successful, [results, achievements]
 The 100 families all say “we are naturally so”².^C

Notes

A : 太上 literally means “highest superior”, which is also a euphemism for the emperor (and so is extrapolated to rulers in general)
 B : *in other words, he does not offer them lightly or often*; this line is very difficult to translate, because WB uses a unique first symbol, while HSG&FY and GUO&MWD/B each use different symbols; however, the two earlier symbols can both mean “to scheme”, thus making a 4/5 majority in meaning; the rest of the sentence is so terse that it can be translated in numerous ways as well
 C : *under the proper rulership, everyone thinks everything just naturally works out right*

Cross-references

fear/afraid : #15, #20, #72, #74
 not trusting enough : #23
 accomplishing tasks : #2, #9, #34, #77
 100 families : #5, #49
 naturally so : #23, #25, #51, #64

Chapter Eighteen

<p>大道廢 • 有仁義 慧智出 • 有大偽 六親不和 有孝慈 國家昏亂 • 有忠臣</p>	<p>When the great Dao is abandoned, There exists kindness and morality.</p> <p>When intelligence and wisdom arise, There exists a great deal of deception.</p> <p>When the six relationships are not in harmony, There exists devoted children and loving parents.</p> <p>When the nation and the families are very confused, There exists loyal officials.</p>
<p>When the <u>great Dao</u> is <u>abandoned</u>, There <u>exists</u> <u>kindness</u>* and <u>morality</u>*. [<u>righteousness</u>] When <u>intelligence</u> and <u>wisdom</u>*^A <u>arise</u>, There <u>exists</u> a <u>great</u> deal of <u>deception</u>*^B. [<u>false, fake</u>] When the <u>six relationships</u>*^C are <u>not in harmony</u>, There <u>exists</u> <u>devoted children</u>* and <u>loving parents</u>*. When the <u>nation</u> and the <u>families</u> are <u>very confused</u>*², There <u>exists</u> <u>loyal</u>* <u>officials</u> { <u>ministers, subjects</u> }.</p>	<p><u>Notes</u> By looking at all the sources, it is easy to see that this chapter grew more anti-Confucian over time! A : the MWD texts use “knowledge” (a non-Confucian term) instead of “wisdom”; this whole sentence is absent in GUO B : this symbol could also be interpreted as hypocrisy, pretense, lying, dishonesty, etc. C : the six relationships refer to “all” the possible kinds of relationship in a family (in ancient China) : husband to wife, wife to husband, father to son, son to father, older brother to younger brother, younger brother to older brother</p> <p><u>Cross-references</u> great Dao : #34, #53 nation <i>and</i> families : #57 anti-Confucian : #3, #19, #27, #33, #38</p>

Chapter Nineteen

絕聖棄智
 民利百倍•
 絕仁棄義
 民復孝慈•
 絕巧棄利
 盜賊無有•
 此三者以為文不足•
 (•)故令有所屬•
 見素
 抱樸
 少私
 寡欲•

Renounce sacredness, abandon wisdom,
 And the citizens benefit 100-fold.
 Renounce kindness, abandon morality,
 And the citizens return to being devoted children and
 loving parents.
 Renounce cleverness, abandon profit,
 And thieves and bandits will not exist.

 These three things thus make a civilized society, but are not
 enough.

 Therefore : to ensure the citizens have a place to belong –
 See the simplicity,
 Embrace the concept of the uncarved block,
 Less selfishness,
 Fewer desires.

Renounce sacredness, abandon wisdom*,
 ♦And the citizens benefit 100-fold.
Renounce kindness*, abandon morality*, [righteousness]
 And the citizens return to being devoted children* and
loving parents*.
Renounce cleverness, abandon profit,
 And thieves and bandits{traitors} will not exist.
These three things thus make a civilized society, but are not
enough. [entities] [formal,polite,culture]
Therefore : to ensure [the citizens] have a place to
belong^A – [make,cause]
See the simplicity,
Embrace the [concept of the] uncarved block,
Less selfishness,
Fewer desires.

Notes
 GUO is significantly different about what to renounce or
 abandon, and the results, and it uses no Confucian terms; as
 early as MWD/B and MWD/A some Confucian terms had
 appeared
 A : *perhaps meaning a place **worth** belonging to?*

Cross-references
 returning : #14, #16, #20, #22, #25, #28, #34, #40, #52,
 #58, #60, #64, #65, #80
 thieves *and* bandits : #57
 uncarved block : #15, #28, #32, #37, #57
 anti-Confucian : #3, #18, #27, #33, #38

Chapter Twenty

絕學無憂
 唯之與阿
 相去幾何
 (美)之與惡
 相去若何
 人之所畏不可不畏。
 荒兮其未央哉(●)
 眾人熙熙
 如享太牢。
 如春登臺
 我獨泊兮(●)
 其未兆
 如嬰兒之未孩
 儻儻兮若無所歸
 眾人皆有餘
 我獨若遺
 我愚人之心也哉(●)
 沌沌兮
 俗人昭昭
 我獨(若)昏(●)
 俗人察察
 我獨悶悶(●)
 澹兮其若海
 (漂)兮若無[所]止
 眾人皆有以
 我獨頑似鄙
 我獨異於人
 而貴食母

Renounce learning and be without worry.

“Yes” together with “yeah” –
 What is their mutual distance or nearness?
 Beautiful together with ugliness –
 What is their mutual distance or similarity?

That which people fear, they are not able to not fear.
 How ridiculous! They are not yet centered!

Everyone is very festive,
 As if enjoying the Tai Lao sacrifice,
 As if climbing terraces in the spring.
 I alone am unmoved! –
 Like one who has not yet given any sign,
 Like a newborn infant who does not yet act like a baby.
 Very tired and worn out!, as if without a place to return to.

Everyone all has more than they need;
 I alone seem to have lost everything.
 I have the heart/mind of a foolish person, indeed!!
 I am very mixed up and confused!

Common people are very clear and bright;
 I alone seem confused.
 Common people are very observant and alert;
 I alone am very gloomy and depressed.
 Tranquil!, they are like the ocean;
 I drift on the wind!, as if without a place to rest.
 Everyone all has a purpose;
 I alone am stupid and stubborn, and appear mean and shallow.

I alone am different compared to other people,
 And value the food of the mother.

Renounce learning and be without worry.^A
 “Yes” [→] together with “yeah”^B –
 What is their mutual distance or nearness^o?
Beautiful{good} [→] together with ugliness^o{evil} –
 What is their mutual distance or similarity?
That which people [they] fear, they are not able to not fear.
 How ridiculous ! They are not yet centered !
 ♦Everyone² is [very] festive, [splendid,merry]²
As if enjoying the Tai Lao sacrifice^C,
As if climbing terraces^D in the spring.
I alone am unmoved ! – [anchored]
 Like one who has not yet given any sign, [his]
 Like a newborn infant² who does not yet [act like] a baby. [him]
 [Very] tired and worn out² !, as if without a place to return
 to.
 ♦Everyone² all has more than they need; [surplus,excess]
I alone seem to have lost everything. [things lost]
I have the heart/mind of a foolish person, indeed! !
 I am [very] mixed up and confused² !
Common people are [very] clear and bright²;
I alone seem^E confused.
Common people are [very] observant and alert²;
I alone am [very] gloomy and depressed².
Tranquil !, they are like the ocean;
 [I] drift [on the wind]^F !, as if without a place to rest.
 ♦Everyone² all has a purpose; [use]
I alone am stupid and stubborn, and appear mean and shallow{rustic}.
I alone am different compared to other people.
And value the food of the mother.

Notes

*This chapter seems to be the sage-like author poking fun at himself, describing how he **appears** to ordinary people who don't understand him; the “very's” scattered throughout the chapter are implied by repeated symbols; only the first 6 lines are present in GUO*

A : many people over the centuries have suggested that this line should be the last in #19 for many good reasons; however, there is an explicit end-of-chapter marker in GUO at the end of #19 (which is not even followed by #20 in its manuscript), so this line does indeed seem to belong here

B : formal versus informal, respectively

C : *according to Lau, the Tai Lao sacrifice was a major feast where sheep, pigs, and ox were ritually sacrificed and eaten*

D : in ancient China, terraces were man-made hills with paths cut into in their sides, leading up to a plateau at the top from which to view the surrounding landscape

E : only WB changed “seem” to “confused”, thus making “very confused”, keeping with all the other “very's”

F : “drift” comes from HSG and FY (while they use different symbols, they have the same meaning, thus making a majority); the symbol in WB means “wind”, and so is incorporated into the added phrase; the “I” is added at the beginning to maintain the I/they alternation

Cross-references

beauty *and* ugly : #2

fear/afraid : #15, #17, #72, #74

baby/infant/child : #10, #28, #49, #55

newborn infant : #10, #28, #55

returning : #14, #16, #19, #22, #25, #28, #34, #40, #52, #58, #60, #64, #65, #80

observant and alert : #58

mother : #1, #25, #52, #59

Chapter Twenty One

孔德之容(唯)道是從
 道之為物(唯)恍(唯)惚
 惚兮恍兮其中有象•
 恍兮惚兮其中有物•
 窈兮冥兮其中有精•
 其精甚真
 其中有信
 自(今)及(古)
 其名不去
 以閱眾甫•
 吾何以知眾甫之(然)哉(•)
 以此•

The greatest De is possible only when Dao is followed.

The action of Dao on creatures is just indistinct, just confusing.

Confusing! and indistinct!, within it exists image.

Indistinct! and confusing!, within it exists things.

Obscure! and dark!, within it exists essence.

Its essence is extremely real and true.

Within it exists truth.

From the present, reaching to antiquity,

Its name has not departed –

Thus I observe the father of the multitudes.

How do I thus know the father of the multitudes is like this?

By means of this.

◆The greatest De [it] is possible only when Dao is followed. [allowed,permitted]

The action of Dao on creatures is just indistinct, just confusing.^A [only] [only]

Confusing ! and indistinct !, within it exists image.

Indistinct ! and confusing !, within it exists things.

Obscure ! and dark !, within it exists essence.

Its essence is extremely real and true.

◆Within it exists truth*.

From the present, reaching to antiquity, [since] [ancient,old]

Its name has not departed –

Thus I observe the father of the multitudes. [examine,inspect]

How do I thus know the father of the multitudes [it] is like this ?

◆By means of this^B.

Notes

A : compare to #14, where something (*presumably Dao*) is also indistinct and confusing, and to #40, where Dao specifically “returns” and “weakens”

B : “*this*” could be referring to observing the action of Dao, or just observing the world in front of you, or to the teachings of the DDJ, or something else – you decide!

Cross-references

confusing and indistinct : #14

essence : #55

how do I thus know : #54, #57

by means of this : #54, #57

Chapter Twenty Two

曲則全•
 枉則直•
 窪則盈
 敝則新•
 少則得•
 多則惑•
 是以聖人
 抱一[以]為天下式
 不自見故明
 不自是故彰
 不自伐故有功•
 不自矜故長•
 (•)夫唯不爭
 (•)故天下莫能與之爭
 古之所謂
 曲則全者
 豈虛言哉 (•)•
 誠全而歸之

What is wrong then becomes whole and perfect.
 What is bent then becomes straight.
 What is hollow then becomes filled.
 What is worn out then becomes new.
 Have little, then gain.
 Have too much, then become confused.

 Thus the sage :
 Embraces the One, thus serving as an example to the world –
 He does not display himself, therefore he has insight.
 Does not consider himself correct, therefore he distinguishes himself.
 Does not boast about himself, therefore he possesses merit.
 Does not brag about himself, therefore he endures.

 Now : only because he does not strive,
 Therefore no one in the world can strive against him.

 That which the ancients say :
 “He who is wrong then becomes whole and perfect” –
 How can these be empty words?
 Be truly whole and perfect, and return to it.

♦What is wrong{bent} then becomes whole and perfect.
 What is bent then becomes straight.
 ♦What is hollow then becomes filled.
 ♦What is worn out then becomes new.
 ♦Have little, then gain.
 ♦Have too much, then become confused.
 ♦Thus² the sage² :
Embraces the One, thus serving as an example to the world² –
 He does not display himself, therefore he has insight.
[show] [wise,sight]
 Does not consider himself correct, therefore he distinguishes himself. [manifest,display→stand out]
 ♦Does not boast about himself, therefore he possesses merit.
 Does not brag about himself, therefore he endures{leads}.
[boast] [long,forever]
 ♦Now : only because he does not strive,
Therefore no one in the world² can strive against him.
[together with]
 ♦That which the ancients [they] say :
 “He who is wrong{bent} then becomes whole and perfect” –
How can these be empty words ?
 Be truly whole and perfect, and return to it^A.

Notes
 A : there is no indication what the “it” is referring to in the original Chinese, so you decide! This symbol also means “them”, *perhaps meaning “return to the ancients”?*

Cross-references
 embraces the One : #10
 serves as an example to the world : #28
 not displaying oneself (showing off) : #24, #47, #72, #77
 display...insight : #24
 correct...distinguishes : #24
 boast : #24, #30
 boast...merit : #24
 brag : #24, #30
 brag...endures : #24
 no striving : #3, #8, #66, #68, #73, #81
 no one in the world can strive against him : #66
 the ancients/elders : #14, #15, #38, #39, #62, #65, #68
 returning : #14, #16, #19, #20, #25, #28, #34, #40, #52, #58, #60, #64, #65, #80

Chapter Twenty Three

希言自然
 (•)故飄風不終朝
 驟雨不終日•
 孰為此者天地•
 天地尚不能久
 而況於人乎(•)
 (•)故從事於道者
 道者同於道
 德者同於德
 失者同於失•
 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
 信不足焉有不信 __

Minimal words are naturally so.
 Therefore : strong winds do not last the entire morning,
 Sudden rains do not last the entire day.

Who makes these things? Heaven and earth.
 Even heaven and earth can not maintain them forever,
 And so how much less can people?

Therefore : of those who engage in Dao –
 He who Daos is one with Dao.
 He who Des is one with De.
 He who loses is one with the loss.

For he who is one with Dao,
 Dao is also pleased to have him.
 For he who is one with De,
 De is also pleased to have him.
 For he who is one with loss,
 Loss is also pleased to have him.

If you do not trust enough, then you will not have
 anyone's trust.

♦Minimal words are naturally so². [rare,infrequent]
Therefore : strong winds² do not last the entire
morning{day}, [whirlwind,cyclone wind]
 ♦Sudden rains do not last the entire day.
Who makes these things? Heaven and earth. [entities]
Even heaven and earth can not maintain them forever,
 [for a long time]
And so how much less can people ? [than]
Therefore : of those who engage² in Dao –
He who Daos is one with² Dao.
 [same compared to→same as]
 ♦He who Des is one with² De. [same compared to]
 ♦He who loses is one with² the loss. [same compared to]
 For he who is one with² Dao, [same compared to]
Dao is also pleased to have him. [gain,get]
 For he who is one with² De, [same compared to]
De is also pleased to have him.^A [gain,get]
 For he who is one with² loss, [same compared to]
Loss is also pleased to have him. [gain,get]
 If you do not trust^{*} enough, then you will not have
 anyone's trust^{*}.

Notes

A : this sentence and the next are very different across the
 sources, and the sentence before (about Dao) is not in the
 MWD's

Cross-references

naturally so : #17, #25, #51, #64
 he who "possesses Dao" : #15, #24, #31, #65, #77
 not trusting enough : #17

Chapter Twenty Five

有物混成
先天地生
寂兮寥兮
獨立不改
周行而不殆
可以為天下母
吾不知其名
字之曰道
強為之名曰大
大曰逝
逝曰遠
遠曰反
(●) 道大
天大
地大
王亦大
域中有四大
而王居其一焉
人法地
地法天
天法道
道法自然

Something existed unformed yet complete,
Before heaven and earth were created.
Silent! Empty!
Standing alone, not changing.
It circulates everywhere, and causes no danger.
It can be considered the mother of the world.

I do not know its name;
Its symbol is called Dao.
If I tried to make its name, I would call it great.
Being great speaks of departing.
Departing speaks of being remote.
Being remote speaks of returning.

Dao is great,
Heaven is great,
Earth is great,
The king is also great.
Within the realm exist four that are great,
And the king resides as one of them!

People follow the earth.
The earth follows heaven.
Heaven follows Dao.
Dao follows what is naturally so.

[Some]thing existed *unformed* yet *complete*,
 [mingled,blended,unstructured]

◆Before heaven and earth were created.
Silent ! Empty !
Standing alone, not changing.
 It *circulates everywhere*², and [causes]^A no danger.
 It can be considered² the mother of the world².
I do not know its name;
Its symbol is called Dao.
 If I tried to make its name, I would call it great.
Being great speaks of departing.
Departing speaks of being remote.
Being remote speaks of returning.
 ◆Dao is great,
 ◆Heaven is great,
 ◆Earth is great,
 ◆The king is also great.
Within the realm exist four that are great, [region,territory]
And the king resides as one of them !
 ◆People follow^B the earth.
 ◆The earth follows heaven.
 ◆Heaven follows Dao.
 ◆Dao follows what is naturally so².

Notes

A : “is in” could also be used here, but as the subject is Dao, this seems unlikely; this sentence is not in the three earliest sources

B : “follow” as in “emulates” or “uses as a model for their own behavior”

Cross-references

no danger : #16, #32, #44, #52

mother : #1, #20, #52, #59

mother of the world : #52

returning : #14, #16, #19, #20, #22, #28, #34, #40, #52,
 #58, #60, #64, #65, #80

remote : #65

remote *and* returning : #65

naturally so : #17, #23, #51, #64

Chapter Twenty Six

重為輕根
 靜為躁君
 是以(君子)終日
 行不離[其]輜
 重雖有榮觀燕
 處超然
 奈何萬乘之主
 而以身輕天下
 輕則失本
 躁則失君

Serious serves as the source of frivolous.
 Stillness serves as the ruler of restlessness.

Thus the noble man travels the entire day,
 And does not stray from his wagon.
 He is serious, even though glorious sights and feasts exist;
 He lives above them, like this.

So how could one be the master of ten thousand chariots,
 And conduct his self frivolously in the world?

Be frivolous, then lose the source.
 Be restless, then lose the rulership.

◆Serious{heavy} serves as the source of frivolous{light}.

◆Stillness serves as the ruler of restlessness^A.

Thus² the noble man^{2*B} travels the entire day,
 And does not stray from his wagon. [leave,depart,separate]
 He is serious^C, even though glorious sights and feasts exist;
 He lives above them, like this^D. [transcend,jump over]
 [So] how² could [one be] the master of ten thousand
 chariots,^E
 And conduct his self^F frivolously{lightly} in the world²?
 [use]

Be frivolous{light}, then lose the source.

◆Be restless, then lose the rulership.

Notes

A : this symbol also means impatience, agitation, anxiety, etc; “stillness” and “restlessness” are presumably referring to inner, mental/emotional qualities

B : Only WB and HSG changed “noble man” to the non-Confucian term “sage”

C : traditionally, the first symbol of this sentence is considered to be the last symbol of the previous sentence (“heavy wagon”); but because the MWD’s have “fields” instead of “wagon” at the end of the previous sentence, and “heavy fields” makes no sense, it is parsed this way

D : *presumably, by being serious and still*

E : *someone very important, such as the supreme ruler of a large nation (one with 10,000 chariots)*

F : this is written in this awkward manner to emphasize that it is the personality or sense-of-self that is being talked about (in the translator’s opinion – see the Introduction and cross-references below)

Cross-references

stillness : #15, #16, #37, #45, #57, #61

stillness and restlessness : #45

noble man : #31

self : #7, #9, #13, #16, #44, #52, #54, #66

Chapter Twenty Eight

<p>知其雄守其雌 為天下谿 為天下谿 常德不離 復歸於嬰兒 知其白守其黑 • 為天下式 為天下式 常德不忒 復歸於無極 知其榮守其辱 為天下谷 為天下谷 常德乃足 復歸於樸 • 樸散則為器 聖人用之則為官長 (•)故大制不割</p>	<p>Know your maleness, but maintain your femaleness. Serve as a stream to the world. Serving as a stream to the world, The ever-constant De will not depart, Returning you to the state of the newborn infant.</p> <p>Know your brightness, but maintain your darkness. Serve as an example to the world. Serving as an example to the world, The ever-constant De will not falter, Returning you to the state of the limitless.</p> <p>Know your honor, but maintain your disgrace. Serve as a valley to the world. Serving as a valley to the world, The ever-constant De will then be sufficient, Returning you to the state of the uncarved block.</p> <p>When the uncarved block is broken up, then it becomes tools. When the sage uses it, then he becomes the senior government official. Therefore : the greatest cutting does not divide.</p>
<p><u>Know your maleness</u>, but <u>maintain your femaleness</u>. [his] [his]</p> <p>◆<u>Serve as a stream</u> to the <u>world</u>². ◆<u>Serving as a stream</u> to the <u>world</u>², The <i>ever-constant De</i> will <u>not depart</u>, ◆<u>Returning</u>² you to [the state of the] <u>newborn infant</u>². <u>Know your brightness</u>, but <u>maintain your darkness</u>. [his] [his]</p> <p><u>Serve as an example</u> to the <u>world</u>². <u>Serving as an example</u> to the <u>world</u>², The <i>ever-constant De</i> will <u>not falter</u>, <u>Returning</u>² you to [the state of the] <u>limitless</u>². [err]</p> <p>[without highest] <u>Know your honor</u>{glory}, but <u>maintain your disgrace</u>^A. [his] [his]</p> <p><u>Serve as a valley</u> to the <u>world</u>². <u>Serving as a valley</u> to the <u>world</u>², The <i>ever-constant De</i> will <u>then be sufficient</u>, <u>Returning</u>² you to [the state of the] <u>uncarved block</u>. ◆When the <u>uncarved block</u> is <u>broken up</u>, <u>then it becomes tools</u>. When the <u>sage</u>² <u>uses it</u>^B, <u>then he becomes the senior government official</u>. [elder] <u>Therefore : the greatest cutting</u> does <u>not divide</u>.^C [cut&make garments]</p>	<p><u>Notes</u></p> <p>A : this could possibly be interpreted by reflection with “glory” as “humbleness” or “humility”, but it means “disgrace” <u>everywhere</u> else B : by using “it”, this refers to the concept of the uncarved block; but the symbol also means “them”, which would refer to the tools C : <i>when the uncarved block is cut, it becomes (merely) tools; when the sage cuts, things are not divided up (see #58)</i></p> <p><u>Cross-references</u></p> <p>feminine : #6, #10, #61 returning : #14, #16, #19, #20, #22, #25, #34, #40, #52, #58, #60, #64, #65, #80 De <i>and</i> returning : #60, #65 baby/infant/child : #10, #20, #49, #55 newborn infant : #10, #20, #55 serve as an example to the world : #22 valley : #6, #15, #32, #39, #41, #66 uncarved block : #15, #19, #32, #37, #57</p>

Chapter Thirty One

(•)夫佳兵者不祥之器。
物或惡之。
(•)故有道者不處
君子居則貴左
用兵則貴右。
兵者不祥之器。
非君子之器。
不得已而用之
恬淡為上
——(勿)美[也(•)]
而美之者是樂殺人。
(•)夫樂殺人者
——不可以得志於天下矣(•)。
[(•)故]吉事尚左。
凶事尚右。
[是以]偏將軍居左
上將軍居右
言以喪禮處之。
殺人——眾
以哀悲泣之
戰勝以喪禮處之。

Now : fine weapons, they are not tools of good fortune.
Creatures detest them, no matter what.
Therefore : he who possesses Dao does not live by them.
When a noble man is in his dwelling, then he honors the
left.

When he commands troops, then he honors the right.

Weapons, they are not tools of good fortune.
They are not the tools of a noble man.
When he has no choice but to use them,
To be calm and indifferent is superior –
Never pleased, indeed!
And he who is pleased enjoys killing people.

Now : he who enjoys killing people
Can not get what he desires from the world!

Therefore : in fortunate affairs honor the left,
In unfortunate affairs honor the right.
Thus the assistant general of the army resides on the left,
The supreme general of the army resides on the right.

Thus we say they are dwelling at a funeral :
When many people are killed,
Then mourn and weep with grief for them.
Victory in war thus means they will dwell at a funeral.

Now : fine weapons, they are not tools of good fortune.

[auspicious,lucky]

◆Creatures detest them, no matter what.

Therefore : he who possesses Dao does not live by them.

◆When a noble man^{2*} is in his dwelling, then he honors the left.

◆When he commands troops², then he honors the right.

Weapons, they are not tools of good fortune.

[auspicious,lucky]

They are not the tools of a noble man^{2*}.

◆When he has no choice³ but to use them,

To be calm and indifferent^A is superior –

Never pleased, indeed!^B

And he who is pleased [he] enjoys² killing people.

[is happy,pleased]

Now : he who enjoys killing people [happy,pleased]

Can² not get what he desires from the world² !

[ambition,will]

Therefore : in fortunate affairs honor the left,

In unfortunate affairs honor the right.

Thus² the assistant general² of the army resides on the left,

◆The supreme general of the army resides on the right.

[highest,superior]

Thus we say they are dwelling at a funeral^{2C} :

When many people are killed,

Then mourn and weep with grief² for them. [thus]

Victory in war thus means they will dwell at a funeral².

Notes

The first three lines are not in GUO

A : WB and HSG's use of "indifferent" seems the most neutral, but the three earliest sources technically have the majority with "reverent", while FY has "peaceful"

B : this line comes from the MWD's and GUO; the later sources are very different (and do not agree with each other); regardless of the source, this line and the next can be translated many different ways due to the multiple meanings of 美 ("pleased", "beautiful", "good"), and whether or not one assumes that weapons are still being talked about

C : *Ames and Hall point out that ancient Chinese custom puts the place of honor on the left in happy events, and on the right in sorrowful events; thus in war, the supreme general sits on the right, acknowledging that war is a sorrowful event, just like a funeral*

Cross-references

creatures detest them : #24

he who "possesses Dao" : #15, #23, #24, #65, #77

noble man : #26

have no choice : #29, #30

Chapter Thirty Three

知人者智•
 自知者明•
 勝人者有力•
 自勝者強•
 知足者富•
 強行者有志•
 不失其所者久•
 死而不亡者壽•

He who knows people is wise;
 He who knows himself has insight.

He who is victorious over people possesses power;
 He who is victorious over himself is strong.

He who knows he has enough is wealthy;
 He who uses force possesses ambition.

He who does not lose his place endures;
 He who dies yet does not perish has longevity.

He who knows people is wise*;

◆He who knows himself has *insight*. [wise,sight]

◆He who is victorious over people possesses power;

◆He who is victorious over himself is strong.

◆He who knows he has enough is wealthy;

◆He who uses force² possesses ambition.

◆He who does not lose his place^A endures;

[for a long time]

He who dies yet does not perish has longevity.^B

Notes

A : possibly meaning one's center, source or root (but then why not use one of the many symbols used elsewhere for these words?), this may be referring to one's station or position in life (ancient Chinese society was highly stratified); but on the other hand, that sounds very Confucian – so you decide!

B : this line has generated much speculation over the millennia; perhaps it refers to being remembered after you die, or the death of the “self”?

Cross-references

strong : #3, #29, #30, #36, #52, #55, #67, #78

knowing one has enough : #44, #46

die/death : #6, #42, #50, #67, #74, #75, #76, #80

anti-Confucian : #3, #18, #19, #27, #38

Chapter Thirty Four

大道汎兮
 其可左右•
 萬物恃之(以)生
 而不辭•
 功成遂
 [而]不名有•
 衣養萬物
 而不為主
 [(•)故]常無欲•
 可名於小•
 萬物歸焉
 而不為主
 可名(於)大•
 (是以聖人之能成大•)
 [以其不為大•]
 (•)故能成一大

Great Dao is like a vast flood!
 It is able to flow left and right.

The ten thousand creatures depend on it in order for life,
 And are not rejected.
 It accomplishes its tasks successfully,
 Yet does not possess a name.
 It clothes and supports the ten thousand creatures,
 But does not act as their master.

Therefore : since it is ever-constantly without-desire,
 It can then be named insignificant.

Since the ten thousand creatures return to it
 But it does not act as their master,
 It can then be named great.

Thus the sage can achieve greatness
 Because he does not act great.
 Therefore he can achieve greatness.

Great Dao is like a vast flood !
 ♦It is able to flow left and right.^A
 The ten thousand creatures depend on it in order for life,
and are not rejected. [decline,dismiss]
 It accomplishes its tasks successfully, yet does not possess
a name. [results,achievements]
 It clothes and supports the ten thousand creatures,
But does not act as their master.
Therefore : since it is ever-constantly without-desire,
 ♦It can then be named insignificant.
 ♦Since the ten thousand creatures return to it
But it does not act as their master,
 It can then be named great.
Thus² the sage² [he] can achieve greatness
Because he does not act great.
Therefore he can achieve greatness.^B

Notes

A : *in other words, everywhere*

B : the last three lines are significantly different between sources. What is used here comes from the MWD's, and FY says the exact same thing with slightly different symbols (thus making it the majority). But HSG reads
Thus² the sage² is whole, but does not act great.
Therefore he can achieve his greatness.

And WB reads (with no reference to the sage, presumably still referring to Dao from earlier in the chapter)

Because it is whole, it naturally does not act great.
Therefore it can achieve its greatness.

WB also switched from saying the sage is great to Dao is great in #67

Cross-references

great Dao : #18, #53

accomplishing tasks : #2, #9, #17, #77

always/ever-constantly without X : #1, #32, #37

without-desire : #1, #3, #37, #57

returning : #14, #16, #19, #20, #22, #25, #28, #40, #52,
 #58, #60, #64, #65, #80

sage can achieve greatness : #63

Chapter Thirty Six

將欲歛之
 必固張之
 將欲弱之
 必固強之
 將欲廢之
 必固興之。
 將欲奪之
 必固與之
 是謂微明。
 柔弱勝剛強
 魚不可脫於淵
 國之利器
 不可以示人。

When you are about to gather something,
 You must have originally spread it out.
 When you are about to weaken something,
 You must have originally strengthened it.
 When you are about to abandon something,
 You must have originally been interested in it.
 When you are about to seize something,
 You must have originally given it.

This is called subtle and obscure insight.

What is soft and weak conquers what is hard and strong.

Fish can not escape from the deep;
 The sharp tools of the nation
 Can not be shown to the people.

When you are about to² gather^A something, [inhale] [it]
 You must have originally spread it out.
 ◆When you are about to² weaken something, [it]
 You must have originally strengthened it.
 When you are about to² abandon something, [it]
 You must have originally been interested in it.
 ◆When you are about to² seize something, [it]
 You must have originally given it.
This is called subtle and obscure insight. [wise,sight]
 What is soft and weak conquers what is hard and strong.
 [victorious,beats]
Fish can not escape from the deep;
 The sharp tools^B of the nation
 ◆Can² not be shown to the people.

Notes

A : while the majority symbol here means “inhale”,
 MWD/A uses a symbol meaning to “pick up” or “collect”
 B : *presumably, weapons*; compare to #80, where there is
 no place to display armor and weapons

Cross-references

weak : #3, #29, #40, #55, #76, #78
 strong : #3, #29, #30, #33, #52, #55, #67, #78
 soft : #10, #43, #52, #55, #76, #78
 hard : #43, #76, #78
 soft conquers hard : #43, #78
 sharp tools : #57

Chapter Thirty Seven

道常無為。
 而無不為。
 侯王若能守之
 萬物將自化
 化而欲作
 吾將鎮之以無名之樸
 無名之樸
 夫亦將無欲
 不欲以靜
 天下將自定。

Dao ever-constantly practices non-action,
 Yet nothing is left undone.

If nobles and kings could maintain it,
 The ten thousand creatures would naturally transform.
 Transform, and if desire arises,
 I would restrain it by means of the nameless uncarved
 block.

In the state of the nameless uncarved block,
 Men also would be without-desire.
 Not desiring, thus they would be still –
 And the world would naturally settle.

Dao ever-constantly [practices] non-action,
Yet nothing is left undone². [not made, become, act]
If nobles^A and kings could maintain it,
 ♦The ten thousand creatures would naturally transform.
 ♦Transform, and if desire arises,
I would restrain it by means of the nameless^{2B} [→]
uncarved block. [subdue, suppress] [without-name]
 In the [state of the] nameless^{2B} [→] uncarved block,
 [without-name]
Men also would be without-desire.
Not desiring, thus they would be still –
 And the world² would naturally settle.

Notes

A : specifically, a Marquis (see #32)
 B : this is actually “without-name” (see the Introduction
 and cross-references below), but cannot be easily worded
 that way here

Cross-references

always/ever-constantly without X : #1, #32, #34
 non-action : #2, #3, #38, #43, #48, #57, #63, #64
 yet nothing is left undone : #48
 nobles (in general) : #32, #39, #42, #62, #80
 if nobles and kings could maintain it : #32
 ten thousand creatures would naturally... : #32
 without-name : #1, #32, #41
 uncarved block : #15, #19, #28, #32, #57
 uncarved block brings without-desire : #57
 without-desire : #1, #3, #34, #57
 stillness : #15, #16, #26, #45, #57, #61

Chapter Thirty Eight

上德不德是以有德
 下德不失德是以無德
 上德無為而無以為•
 下德為之而有以為
 上仁為之而無以為•
 上義為之而有以為•
 上禮為之而莫之以應•
 則攘臂而(仍)之
 (•)故失道而後德
 失德而後仁
 失仁而後義•
 失義而後禮
 (•)夫禮者忠信之薄•
 而亂之首•
 前識者道之華•
 而愚之始•
 是以大丈夫
 處其厚不居其薄
 處其實不居其華
 (•)故去彼取此•

A man of highest De does not use his De, thus he possesses De.
 A man of inferior De does not lose his De, thus he is without De.

 A man of highest De uses non-action, and acts without motive.
 A man of inferior De coerces others, and has a motive to act.
 A man of highest kindness coerces others, and acts without motive.
 A man of highest morality coerces others, and has a motive to act.
 A man of highest propriety coerces others, and if there is no one who responds,
 Then he rolls up his sleeves and keeps doing it.

 Therefore : lose Dao, and later comes De.
 Lose De, and later comes kindness.
 Lose kindness, and later comes morality.
 Lose morality, and later comes propriety.
 Now : propriety is that which is merely the appearance of loyalty and honesty,
 And the beginning of confusion.

 He who is ahead in knowledge has the flower of Dao,
 But the beginning of stupidity and foolishness.

 Thus the greatest elders :
 Live by Dao's substance, and do not dwell on Dao's appearance.
 Live on Dao's fruit, and do not dwell on Dao's flower.
 Therefore they leave that and choose this.

◆A man of highest De does not [use his] De, thus² he possesses De.

◆A man of inferior De does not lose^A his De, thus² he is without De.

◆A man of highest De uses non-action, and acts without motive. [because,in order to]

A man of inferior De coerces^B others, and has a motive to act. [acts] [them] [because,in order to]

◆A man of highest kindness* coerces others, and acts without motive. [acts] [them] [because,in order to]

◆A man of highest morality* coerces others, and has a motive to act. [righteousness] [acts] [them] [because,in order to]

◆A man of highest propriety* coerces others, and if there is no one who [thus] responds, [acts] [them] [they] Then he rolls up his sleeves² and keeps doing it.^C

Therefore : lose Dao, and later comes De.
 Lose De, and later comes kindness*.
 Lose kindness*, and later comes morality*. [righteousness]
 Lose morality*, and later comes propriety*. [righteousness]
 Now : propriety* is that which is [merely] the appearance of loyalty* and honesty*, [thin cover→facade]

◆And the beginning of confusion.

◆He who is ahead in knowledge^D has the flower^E of Dao,
But the beginning of stupidity and foolishness.

◆Thus² the greatest elders² : [elder men]
Live by Dao's substance^F, and do not dwell on Dao's appearance. [its] [its] [thin cover→facade]
Live on Dao's fruit^E, and do not dwell on Dao's flower^E. [its] [its]
Therefore they leave that and choose this.^G

Notes

This chapter is anti-Confucian as early as MWD/B!

A : *he does not lose De in that he is always trying to show that he has De*

B : “coerces” is the same symbol as “acts”, but is used here to emphasize that it is the opposite of “non-action”

C : this line varies greatly between all the sources, and there is no majority; this comes from FY as it seems to make the most sense

D : this could also mean “future knowledge” and so is often translated as “foreknowledge”, “prescience”, etc.

E : *fruit provides nourishment, whereas a flower is merely showy*

F : compare to #50 and #75, where living for the “substance” is apparently a bad thing

G : *presumably, appearance and the “flower” vs. substance and the “fruit” (respectively)*

Cross-references

non-action : #2, #3, #37, #43, #48, #57, #63, #64

the ancients/elders : #14, #15, #22, #39, #62, #65, #68

substance : #50, #55, #75

leave that and choose this : #12, #72

anti-Confucian : #3, #18, #19, #27, #33

Chapter Thirty Nine

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。
 侯王得一以為天下貞
 其致之。
 天無以清
 將恐裂
 地無以寧
 將恐發
 神無以靈
 將恐歇
 谷無以盈
 將恐竭
 萬物無以生
 將恐滅
 侯王無以貴高
 將恐蹶
 (•)故貴以賤為本
 高以下為基
 是以侯王自謂孤寡不穀
 此非以賤為本(邪(•))
 非乎(•)
 (•)故致數輿無輿
 不欲碌碌如玉
 珞珞如石

Of those who in ancient times attained oneness :
 Heaven attained oneness, thus becoming pure and clear.
 Earth attained oneness, thus becoming stable.
 Spirit attained oneness, thus becoming potent.
 The valley attained oneness, thus becoming full.
 The ten thousand creatures attained oneness, thus
 becoming alive.
 Nobles and kings attained oneness, thus serving the world
 faithfully.
 They attained it.

If heaven could not use its purity and clarity,
 I fear it would split apart.
 If earth could not use its stability,
 I fear it would erupt.
 If spirit could not use its potency,
 I fear it would cease to be.
 If the valley could not use its fullness,
 I fear it would be used up.
 If the ten thousand creatures could not use their life,
 I fear they would be destroyed.
 If nobles and kings could not use their high rank and
 prominence,
 I fear they would fall.

Therefore : humility thus serves as the source of high rank;
 Low thus serves as the foundation of high.
 Thus nobles and kings call themselves orphaned, lonely,
 and unlucky.
 Does this not mean that humility thus serves as the source?
 Does it not?

Therefore : to attain exceptional popularity is to be without
 popularity –
 Do not desire to be scarce like jade,
 But common like rock.

Chapter Forty

反者道之動•
弱者道之用•
天下萬物生於有
有生於無•

The movement of Dao returns things.
The function of Dao is to weaken things.

The ten thousand creatures of the world are created from being;
Being is created from non-being.

◆The movement of Dao returns *things*. [entities]
◆The function of Dao is to weaken things.^A
[usefulness] [entities]
The ten thousand^B creatures of the world² are created from being.^C
Being is created from non-being.^D

Notes

A : *all creatures grow weaker as they age, and all man-made things decay and fall apart, which is the way (Dao) of the universe; this is why in #30 and #55 creatures which are old but still robust are “not Dao”*; compare these first two lines to #14 and #21, where Dao’s action is indistinct and confusing

B : technically, the majority of the sources read “The creatures of the world...” but “ten thousand creatures” is such a standard saying everywhere else that it is retained here from the other sources

C : compare to #42, where creatures are created by “three”

D : compare to #2, where non-being and being create each other

Cross-references

returning : #14, #16, #19, #20, #22, #25, #28, #34, #52, #58, #60, #64, #65, #80

weak : #3, #29, #36, #55, #76, #78

non-being : #2, #43

Chapter Forty One

<p>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。 (•)故建言有之(曰)。 明道若昧 進道若退 夷道若類 上德若谷。 大白若辱 廣德若不足 建德若偷 質真若渝 大方無隅 大器晚成 大音希聲 大象無形 道隱無名。 (•)夫唯道善(始)且(善)成</p>	<p>The superior scholar hearing of Dao works hard and practices it. The average scholar hearing of Dao seems to keep it, seems to lose it. The inferior scholar hearing of Dao laughs greatly at it. If he did not laugh, it would not be qualified to be Dao. Therefore : in the established sayings that exist, it is said – Insight into Dao seems like darkness. Advancing in Dao seems like retreating. Smooth Dao seems knotted. Superior De seems like a valley. The greatest purity seems like disgrace. The most extensive De seems like it is not enough. Established De seems aimless. Real and true character seems inconsistent. The greatest region is without borders. The greatest vessel is last to be completed. The greatest tone is a tenuous sound. The greatest image is without-form. Dao is hidden and without-name. Now : only Dao is good at beginning and also good at completing.</p>
<p>The superior scholar hearing of Dao works hard and practices it. [performs] The average scholar hearing of Dao seems to keep it, seems to lose it. [middle] ♦The inferior scholar hearing of Dao laughs greatly at it. ♦If he did not laugh, it would not be qualified³ to be Dao. Therefore : in the established sayings^{2A} that exist, it is said – Insight into Dao seems like darkness. [wise,sight] ♦Advancing in Dao seems like retreating. ♦Smooth Dao seems knotted.^B ♦Superior De seems like a valley. ♦The greatest purity seems like disgrace. ♦The most extensive De seems like it is not enough. ♦Established De seems aimless. Real and true character seems inconsistent. [change] ♦The greatest region is without borders.^C The greatest vessel is last to be completed.^D [late] The greatest tone is a tenuous sound. [rare] The greatest image is without-form. Dao is hidden and without-name. Now : only Dao is good at beginning and also good at completing.^E</p>	<p><u>Notes</u> A : Ames&Hall comment that it is unknown whether “established sayings” is referring to proverbs in general, or a specific work that no longer exists B : compare to #53, where “Dao is extremely even” C : this line could just as likely be translated as The greatest square is without corners but considering that the DDJ often refers to nations, this translation seems more appropriate D : a euphemism for “great talents mature slowly” E : although this line only survives in MWD/B of the three earlier sources, it is used here because it is much more straightforward and understandable than the later three</p> <p><u>Cross-references</u> scholar : #15, #68 valley : #6, #15, #28, #32, #39, #66 tone and voice/sound (same symbol) : #2 tenuous : #14 hidden : #15 without-name : #1, #32, #37</p>

Chapter Forty Two

道生一
 一生二
 二生三
 三生萬物
 萬物負陰而抱陽
 沖氣以為和
 人之所惡
 唯孤寡不穀
 而王公以(白)稱。
 (•)故物
 或損之而益
 或益之而損
 人之所教我亦教之
 強梁者不得其死
 吾將以為教父

Dao creates one.
 One creates two.
 Two creates three.
 Three creates the ten thousand creatures.
 The ten thousand creatures carry Yin and embrace Yang,
 Pouring their Qi together, thus becoming harmonious.

That which people detest :
 Being alone, orphaned, lonely, and unlucky –
 Yet kings and nobles thus name themselves.

Therefore : creatures
 Sometimes lose, yet they gain;
 Sometimes gain, yet they lose.

That which people teach, I also teach :
 Those who are bullies and hoodlums do not meet their
 natural death.
 I will thus become their elder teacher.

◆Dao creates one.
 ◆One creates two.
 ◆Two creates three.
 ◆Three creates the ten thousand creatures.^A
 ◆The ten thousand creatures carry Yin and embrace Yang.
 ◆Pouring their Qi together, thus becoming harmonious.
 ◆That which people [they] detest :
 ◆Being alone, orphaned {lonely}, lonely {widowed}, and
unlucky^{2B} – [not lucky]
Yet kings and nobles^C thus name themselves. [dukes]
Therefore : creatures
Sometimes lose, yet they gain;
 [maybe,perhaps] [benefit,increase]
Sometimes gain, yet they lose.
 [maybe,perhaps] [benefit,increase]
That which people [they] teach, I also teach [it] :
Those who are bullies and hoodlums do not meet their
 [natural] death. [bully,ruffian²] [obtain,get]
I will thus become their elder teacher.^D

Notes

A : compare to #40, where creatures are created from being
 B : these two symbols together can also be translated as
 “worthless” or “unhappy”
 C : specifically Dukes (see #32), but in keeping with other
 chapters, this is interpreted more generally as “nobles”
 D : 教父 is often translated as some variant of “senior
 teaching” (primary teaching, essence of teaching, principal
 teaching, etc.), but it also means “godfather” in the best
 sense of the term (friend and teacher), and this translation is
 consistent with #27, where a virtuous person is the teacher
 of a non-virtuous person

Cross-references

Qi : #10, #55
 orphaned, lonely, and unlucky : #39
 nobles (in general) : #32, #37, #39, #62, #80
 creatures sometimes X...Y : #29
 teaching : #2, #27, #43
 die/death : #6, #33, #50, #67, #74, #75, #76, #80

Chapter Forty Three

天下之至柔
 馳騁天下之至堅
 無有入無間
 吾是以知無為之有益。
 不言之教
 無為之益
 天下希及之。

The softest things of the world
 Overrun the hardest things of the world.

Non-being can enter where there is no space in between.
 Thus I know that non-action has benefits.

The teaching of no-talking,
 The benefit of non-action –
 Few in the world attain these.

◆The *softest*² things of the world² [most soft]
 Overrun the *hardest*² things of the world².
 [gallop²] [most hard]
Non-being can enter where there is no space in between.
 ◆Thus² I know that non-action [it] has benefits.
 ◆The teaching of no-talking,
 ◆The benefit of non-action –
 Few in the world² attain these. [rare,infrequent] [them]

Notes

Cross-references
 soft : #10, #36, #52, #55, #76, #78
 hard : #36, #76, #78
 soft conquers hard : #36, #78
 non-being : #2, #40
 non-action : #2, #3, #37, #38, #48, #57, #63, #64
 teaching : #2, #27, #42
 teaching of no-talking : #2

Chapter Forty Four

名與身孰親
 身與貨孰多
 得與亡孰病
 甚愛必大費
 多藏必厚亡
 知足不辱
 知止不殆
 可以長久

Fame and self : which do you love?
 Self and property : which is greater?
 Gain and loss : which is the affliction?

Extreme desire must lead to great expense.
 Collecting too much must lead to substantial loss.

Knowing when you have enough, there can be no disgrace.
 Knowing when to stop, there can be no danger.
 Then you can forever endure.

- ◆ Fame and self : which do you love?
- ◆ Self and property : which is greater? [many,much,more]
- ◆ Gain and loss : which is the affliction? [sickness,illness]
- ◆ Extreme desire must lead to great expense.
[like,affection]
- ◆ Collecting too much must lead to substantial loss.
- ◆ Knowing when you have enough, there can be no disgrace.
- ◆ Knowing when to stop, there can be no danger.
- ◆ Then you can² forever endure. [for a long time]

Notes

With the exception of a couple of “therefore”s in some sources but not others, this is the only chapter for which virtually every symbol is identical across all sources!

Cross-references

self : #7, #9, #13, #16, #26, #52, #54, #66
 knowing you have enough : #33, #46
 knowing when to stop : #32
 no danger : #16, #25, #32, #52
 can forever endure : #59

Chapter Forty Five

<p>大成若缺 其用不弊• 大盈若(盅) 其用不窮• 大直若屈• 大巧若拙• 大辯若訥• 躁勝寒• 靜勝熱 清靜為天下正•</p>	<p>Great achievement seems incomplete, But its usefulness is not impaired.</p> <p>Great fullness is like a cup or bowl, Its usefulness is not exhausted.</p> <p>Great straightness seems bent. Great skillfulness seems clumsy. Great debaters seem slow of speech.</p> <p>Restlessness conquers cold. Stillness conquers heat.</p> <p>Purity and clarity along with stillness makes the world proper and correct.</p>
<p><u>Great achievement seems incomplete</u>, But <u>its usefulness is not impaired</u>. <u>Great fullness is like a cup or bowl</u>^A, <u>Its usefulness is not exhausted</u>. <u>Great straightness seems bent</u>. <u>Great skillfulness seems clumsy</u>.^B <u>Great debaters seem slow of speech</u>^C. ◆<u>Restlessness conquers cold</u>. [victorious,beats] ◆<u>Stillness conquers heat</u>. [victorious,beats] <u>Purity and clarity</u>^D along with <u>stillness</u>^D <u>makes the world</u>² <u>proper and correct</u>{<u>honest and just</u>}.</p>	<p><u>Notes</u> A : the symbol used here only appears in 1/5 sources, but gives the most understandable translation (and matches the first line in #4) B : this line could just as likely be translated as <u>Great cleverness seems stupid</u>. C : this is a euphemism for stammering, but also represents a personal quality that Confucius recommended people cultivate D : <i>presumably referring to inner, mental/emotional qualities</i></p> <p><u>Cross-references</u> stillness : #15, #16, #26, #37, #57, #61 stillness <i>and</i> restlessness : #26</p>

Chapter Forty Six

天下有道
 卻走馬以糞
 天下無道
 戎馬生於郊。
 (罪莫大於可欲)
 禍莫大於不知足
 咎莫大於欲得
 (•)故知足之足常足矣(•)。

When the world possesses Dao,
 Riding horses are nonetheless used for manure.
 When the world is without Dao,
 War-horses are bred in the countryside.

There is no fault greater than the capacity for desire.
 There is no misfortune greater than not knowing when
 you have enough.
 There is no error greater than desire for gain.

Therefore : knowing the sufficiency of having enough,
 there is always enough!

- ◆When the world² possesses Dao,
- ◆Riding horses are *nonetheless* used for manure.
[still,yet,however]
- ◆When the world² is without Dao,
- ◆War-horses are *bred* in the *countryside*.
[military] [produced] [open spaces/outskirts]
- ◆There is no fault greater than the *capacity* for desire.^A
[ability]
- ◆There is no misfortune greater than not knowing when
 you have enough.
- ◆There is no error greater than desire for gain.
Therefore : knowing the sufficiency of having enough,
 there is always enough !^B

Notes

A : this line is in every source except WB
 B : The core of this sentence is “足 of 足 always 足”,
 where 足 can mean “enough”, “sufficient”, or possibly
 “satisfaction” (and by interpretation, “contentment”), so it
 can be translated in many ways; while I usually use the
 same English word for each symbol (when appropriate), in
 this case it seems clearer to use different words with
 equivalent meanings within the same sentence; this would
 be similar to changing the phrase “appears to have
 appeared” to “seems to have appeared”

Cross-references

knowing you have enough : #33, #44

Chapter Forty Seven

不出戶
 [以]知天下
 不闚牖
 [以](知)天道
 其出彌遠
 其知彌少
 是以聖人
 不行而知
 不見而名
 不為而成

You do not have to go out the door
 In order to to know the world.
 You do not have to look out the window
 In order to to know the Way of heaven.

The farther you go out,
 You know even less.

Thus the sage :
 Does not travel, yet knows.
 Does not display himself, yet has a reputation.
 Does not act, yet accomplishes.

You do not have to go out the door
In order to to know the world².
 You do not have to *look out* the window [peep.spy]
In order to to know the Way of heaven.
 ♦The *farther*² you go out, [even more distance] [he]
 You know even[more] less. [he]
Thus² the sage² :
 Does not travel, yet knows.
 Does not *display* himself, yet has a reputation. [show]
 ♦Does not act, yet accomplishes.

Notes

Cross-references
 Way of heaven : #9, #73, #77, #79, #81
 not displaying oneself (showing off) : #22, #24, #72, #77

Chapter Forty Eight

為學(者)日益
 為道(者)日損
 損之又損
 以至於無為•
 無為而無不為•
 取天下常以無事
 及其有事•
 不足以取天下

The actions of those who learn daily increase.
 The actions of those who Dao daily decrease.
 Decreasing and again decreasing,
 In order to arrive at non-action.

Use non-action, and nothing is left undone.
 To take hold of the world, always use non-interference.
 When you are compelled to interfere,
 Then you are not qualified to take hold of the world.

- ◆The actions of those who learn daily increase.
- ◆The actions of those who Dao daily decrease.
Decreasing [them] and again decreasing.
- ◆In order to arrive at non-action.
- ◆Use non-action, and nothing is left *undone*².
[not made,become,act]
- To take hold of the world², always use non-interference².
- ◆When you are *compelled to interfere*^{o, ^},
[he] [have,possess]
- ◆Then you are not qualified to³ take hold of the world².

Notes

A : literally, when you “possess interference”; although 事 does not ordinarily mean interfere, this is assumed by reflection from the previous line

Cross-references

non-action : #2, #3, #37, #38, #43, #57, #63, #64
 nothing is left undone : #37
 non-interference : #57, #63
 possess or take hold of the world or nation :
 #29, #57, #59, #61
 by using non-interference : #57

Chapter Forty Nine

聖人無常心
 以百姓心為心
 善者吾善之
 不善者吾亦善之
 德善•
 信者吾信之
 不信者吾亦信之
 德信•
 聖人在天下歛歛
 [焉]為天下渾其心
 百姓皆注其耳目
 聖人皆孩之

The sage does not have a constant heart/mind,
 Thus the 100 families' heart/minds become his heart/mind.

He who is virtuous, I am virtuous to him.
 He who is not virtuous, I am also virtuous to him.
 Because De is virtue.

He who is honest, I am honest with him.
 He who is not honest, I am also honest with him.
 Because De is honesty.

The sage lives in the world, gathering it all in.
 And so he serves the world, merging with their
 heart/minds.

The 100 families all pay attention to their ears and eyes,
 And the sage treats them all like his children.

The sage² does not have a constant heart/mind,
 ♦Thus the 100 families' heart/minds become his
heart/mind.
 ♦He who is virtuous, I am virtuous to him.
 ♦He who is not virtuous, I am also virtuous to him.
 ♦Because De is virtue.
 ♦He who is honest*, I am honest* with him.
 ♦He who is not honest*, I am also honest* with him.
 ♦Because De is honesty*.
 ♦The sage² lives in the world², gathering it all in^{2A}.
[inhale inhale]
 ♦And so he serves the world², merging with their
heart/minds.^B
 ♦The 100 families all pay attention to their ears and eyes^C,
 ♦And the sage² treats them all like [his]^D children.

Notes

A : compare to #50, which refers to one who “takes in life”; “gathering” is used for consistency with #36; the repeated symbol implies “very”, hence completeness

B : this line can be translated in many ways, mainly due to the fact that the symbol for “merges” can also mean “muddled” or “whole”; also 其 (his/their) could be referring to the sage or to the 100 families; the choices made here are consistent with the first two lines of the chapter

C : compare to #12, where the sage does not act on what he sees

D : adding “his” turns this line from something derogatory (“treats them all like children”, which seems out of character) into something that matches #42, where the sage becomes an “elder teacher” (literally, godfather)

Cross-references

100 families : #5, #17

one who is not virtuous : #27, #62, #81

serve the world : #13, #39

baby/infant/child : #10, #20, #28, #55

Chapter Fifty

出生入死
 生之徒十有三
 死之徒十有三
 人之生動之死地
 亦十有三
 (•)夫何故。
 以其生生之厚。
 蓋聞善攝生者
 (陵)行不遇兕虎
 入軍不被甲兵
 兕無所投其角
 虎無所措其爪
 兵無所容其刃
 (•)夫何故。
 以其無死地

Between coming out into life and entering death,
 Followers of life are 3 in 10.
 Followers of death are 3 in 10.
 People whose lives are merely moving them towards the
 place of death
 Are also 3 in 10.

Now : what is the reason?
 Because they live life for its substance.

But I have heard that he who is skilled at taking in life
 Can travel the mountains and does not meet rhino or tiger,
 Can enter a battle not wearing armor or weapons.
 The rhino has no place to thrust its horns,
 The tiger has no place to use its claws,
 The weapon has no place to allow its blade.

Now : what is the reason?
 Because for him there is no place of death.

♦Between coming out into life and entering death,
 ♦Followers^A of life are *3 in 10*^B. [10 has 3]
 ♦Followers of death are *3 in 10*. [10 has 3]
 People whose lives are [merely] moving them towards the
place of death^C [their]
 Are *also 3 in 10*. [10 has 3]
 Now : what is the reason?
 Because they live life for its substance^D.
 ♦But I have heard that he who is skilled at taking in^E life
 Can travel the mountains and does not meet rhino or tiger,
 ♦Can enter a battle not wearing armor or weapons.
 [army,military]
 ♦The rhino has no place to thrust its horns, [send,put in]
 The tiger has no place to use its claws, [employ]
 ♦The weapon has no place to allow its blade.
 Now : what is the reason?
 Because for him there is no place of death.

Notes

A : “follower” as in disciple or one who agrees with a particular way of looking at things
 B : this phrase can also be interpreted as “13”, possibly referring to the 4 limbs and 9 openings of the human body, but when using “3 in 10” then the first five lines discuss 9 out of 10 people, and the remaining lines seem to talk about the tenth (*presumably sage-like*) person
 C : there are many different interpretations of this phrase (and the entire sentence); *presumably, the “place of death” is the end destination of the journey of life as opposed to a literal location (a more modern interpretation of the symbols is the “point of death”)*; while the symbols for this sentence come from WB and HSG and are technically a minority, the phrasing they use here matches that in the third line following
 D : compare to #38, where living for the “substance” is apparently a good thing, and #75, where it is a bad thing
 E : compare to #49, where the sage “gathers in the world”; the last part of this sentence could also be translated as “he who has virtue and takes in life”

Cross-references

die/death : #6, #33, #42, #67, #74, #75, #76, #80
 follower of life *and* follower of death : #76
 substance : #38, #55, #75

Chapter Fifty One

<p>道生之 德畜之 物形之 勢成之 是以萬物 莫不尊道而貴德 道之尊• 德之貴• (•)夫莫之命• 而常自然• (•)故道生之德畜之 長之育之 亭之毒之 養之覆之 生而不有• 為而不恃• 長而不宰 是謂玄德</p>	<p>Dao creates them, De raises them, Things shape them, Circumstances complete them.</p> <p>Thus among the ten thousand creatures, There are none who do not respect Dao and honor De. Respect of Dao, Honor of De – Now : there is no one who commands this, Yet it is always naturally so.</p> <p>Therefore : Dao creates them, De raises them. Leads them, nourishes them, Shelters them, heals them, Supports them, protects them.</p> <p>Creating but not possessing, Acting but not concerned with the results, Leading yet not governing – This is called deep and mysterious De.</p>
<p>◆<u>Dao creates them,</u> ◆<u>De raises them,</u> <u>Things shape them,</u> <u>Circumstances complete them.</u> [conditions,situations] ◆<u>Thus² [among] the ten thousand creatures,</u> <u>There are none who do not respect Dao and honor De.</u> ◆<u>Respect of Dao,</u> ◆<u>Honor of De –</u> <u>Now : there is no one who commands this,</u> [they] <u>Yet it is always naturally so².</u> <u>Therefore : Dao creates them, De raises them.</u> ◆<u>Leads them, nourishes them,</u> ◆<u>Shelters them, heals^A them,</u> [booth,pavillion,rest house] [poison(ous)] ◆<u>Supports them, protects them.</u> [cover,screen] ◆<u>Creating but not possessing,</u> ◆<u>Acting but not concerned with [the results],</u> [depend upon,rely upon] <u>Leading yet not governing –</u> ◆<u>This is called deep and mysterious De.</u></p>	<p><u>Notes</u> A : Hatcher claims that 覆 (poison) can also mean its opposite, hence “healing”</p> <p><u>Cross-references</u> naturally so : #17, #23, #25, #64 creating but not possessing : #2, #10 acting but not concerned : #2, #10, #77 leading yet not governing : #10 mystery : #1, #6, #10, #15, #27, #56, #62, #65 deep and mysterious De : #10, #65</p>

Chapter Fifty Three

•使我介然有知•
 行於大道
 唯迤是畏
 大道甚夷•
 而民好徑•
 朝甚除•
 田甚蕪•
 倉甚虛
 服文綵
 帶利劍
 厭飲食•
 財貨有餘
 是謂盜夸
 非道也哉(•)

If I correctly use the tiniest bit of knowledge that I possess
 While travelling on the great Way,
 It is only walking off the path that I need to fear.
 The great Way is extremely even,
 But the citizens are fond of side paths.

Although the royal court is very well-kept,
 The fields are very overgrown with weeds,
 The granaries are very empty.
 While at the court they wear refined multicolored silks,
 Carry sharp swords,
 Stuff themselves with drink and food,
 And have an excess of wealth and goods.

This is called robbery and extravagance,
 Not Dao, indeed!!

If I correctly use the tiniest bit of knowledge that I possess

◆While travelling on the great Way,

It is only walking off the path that I need to fear.

◆The great Way is extremely even,^A

But the citizens are fond of [side] paths.

◆[Although] the royal court is very well-kept,
 [remove,wipe out→clean]

◆The fields are very overgrown with weeds,

◆The granaries are very empty.

[While at the court] they wear refined{formal}
multicolored silks,

◆Carry sharp swords,

Stuff themselves with drink and food, [satiated,satisfy]

◆And have an excess of wealth and goods.

This is called robbery^B and extravagance,

◆Not Dao, indeed! !

Notes

A : compare to #41, where “smooth Dao seems knotted”

B: a play on words, since 盜 (robbery) is also pronounced “dao”

Cross-references

great Dao : #18, #34

Chapter Fifty Four

善建者不拔
 善抱者不脫
 子孫以祭祀不輟
 修之—身其德乃(真)
 修之—家其德乃餘
 修之—鄉其德乃長
 修之—國其德乃豐
 修之—天下其德乃普
 (•)故以身觀身
 以家觀家
 以鄉觀鄉
 以國觀國
 以天下觀天下
 吾何以知天下然哉(•)
 以此

That which is well established is not uprooted.
 That which is well embraced is not abandoned.
 Thus children and grandchildren offer sacrifices, and so
 sacrifices do not stop.

Cultivate it in the self – your De will then be true and real.
 Cultivate it in the family – its De will then be more than
 enough.

Cultivate it in the village – its De will then last forever.
 Cultivate it in the nation – its De will then be abundant.
 Cultivate it in the world – its De will then be everywhere.

Therefore : use your self to contemplate the self.
 Use your family to contemplate the family.
 Use your village to contemplate the village.
 Use your nation to contemplate the nation.
 Use the world to contemplate the world.

How do I thus know the world is like this?
 By means of this.

- ◆That which is well established is not uprooted. [skillfully]
- ◆That which is well embraced is not abandoned. [skillfully]
- Thus children and grandchildren offer sacrifices, [and so]
sacrifices do not stop.^A
- ◆Cultivate it^B in the self – your De will then be
true and real. [his]
- Cultivate it in the family – its De will then be more than
enough. [surplus,excess]
- ◆Cultivate it in the village – its De will then last forever.
- Cultivate it in the nation – its De will then be abundant.
- Cultivate it in the world² – its De will then be everywhere.
- Therefore : use [your] self to contemplate^C the self.
- ◆Use [your] family to contemplate the family. [observe]
- Use [your] village to contemplate the village. [observe]
- ◆Use [your] nation to contemplate the nation. [observe]
- ◆Use the world² to contemplate the world². [observe]
- ◆How do I thus know the world² is like this ?
- ◆By means of this^D.

Notes

A : *this line seems to merely be a “for example”*; the main point of the first two lines then continues with the “cultivate” lines

B : *presumably, De*; but the original Chinese just says “it”, so you decide!

C : while the common meaning of this symbol is “observe” (as used elsewhere), here it is taken to mean to contemplate or meditate upon, with the connotation of examining a concept in order to see things as they really are

D : *“this” could be referring to contemplating the previous things, or just observing the world in front of you, or to the teachings of the DDJ, or to something else – you decide!*

Cross-references

self : #7, #9, #13, #16, #26, #44, #52, #66

how do I thus know... : #21, #57

by means of this : #21, #57

Chapter Fifty Five

含德之厚[者]
 比於赤子•
 蜂蠆虺蛇不螫
 猛獸不據
 攫鳥不搏
 骨弱筋柔而握固•
 未知牝牡之合而(媿)作
 精之至也(•)•
 終日號而不嘎
 和之至也(•)
 知和曰常
 知常曰明
 益生曰祥•
 心使氣曰強
 物壯則老
 謂之不道•
 不道早已

He who embodies the substance of De
 Can be compared to a newborn child :
 Wasps, scorpions, snakes, and serpents do not sting him,
 Fierce beasts do not seize him,
 Birds of prey do not claw him.
 His bones are weak, his muscles are soft, yet his grasp is
 firm and strong.
 He has not yet known the union of female and male, yet his
 penis rises.
 He has the utmost essence, indeed!
 He cries the entire day yet does not get hoarse.
 He has the utmost harmony, indeed!

Knowing harmony speaks of the ever-constant.
 Knowing the ever-constant speaks of insight.
 Benefitting life speaks of good fortune.
 Heart/mind making Qi speaks of strength.

When creatures are robust but old,
 We call them “not Dao”.
 That which is “not Dao” has an early finish.

♦He who embodies the substance of De
 ♦Can be compared to a newborn child² :
Wasps, scorpions, snakes, and serpents do not sting him,
Fierce beasts do not seize him,
Birds of prey² do not claw him.
 [seize,catch,take hold bird] [roll around with hand]
 ♦His bones are weak, his muscles are soft, yet his grasp is
firm and strong.
 He has not yet known the union of female and male, yet his
penis rises. [baby's genitals]
 ♦He has the utmost [of] essence, indeed! [extreme,most]
 ♦He cries the entire day yet does not get hoarse.
 ♦He has the utmost [of] harmony, indeed! [extreme,most]
 ♦Knowing harmony speaks of the ever-constant.
 ♦Knowing the ever-constant speaks of insight. [wise,sight]
 ♦Benefitting life speaks of good fortune.^A
 [auspicious,lucky]
 ♦Heart/mind making Qi speaks of strength.
 ♦When creatures are robust but old,
 ♦We call them “not Dao”.
 [That which is] “not Dao” has an early finish.

Notes
 The last sentence is in all sources except GUO
 A : this sentence and the next are sometimes reversed in
 meaning, as their last symbols have both positive and
 negative interpretations

Cross-references
 substance : #38, #50, #75
 baby/infant/child : #10, #20, #28, #49
 newborn infant : #10, #20, #28
 weak : #3, #29, #36, #40, #76, #78
 soft : #10, #36, #43, #52, #76, #78
 strong : #3, #29, #30, #33, #36, #52, #67, #78
 essence : #21
 knowing the ever-constant speaks of insight : #16
 Qi : #10, #42
 when creatures are robust but old : #30
 “not Dao” has an early finish : #30

Chapter Fifty Seven

• 以正治國
 以奇用兵
 以無事取天下
 吾何以知其然哉(•)
 以此
 天下多忌諱
 而民彌貧•
 民多利器
 [而]國家滋昏
 人多(知)巧
 [而]奇物滋起
 法(物)滋(章)
 盜賊多有
 (•)故聖人云
 我無為而民自化
 我好靜而民自正
 我無事而民自富
 我無欲而民自樸•

Use honesty and justness when governing a nation.
 Use strange and unusual tactics when commanding troops.
 Use non-interference to take hold of the world.
 How do I thus know it is like this?
 By means of this :

The world has many prohibitions and taboos,
 And the citizens become even poorer.
 The citizens have many sharp tools,
 And the nation and the families grow in confusion.
 The people have too much knowledge and cleverness,
 And strange things begin to increase.
 Matters of law are increasingly proclaimed,
 And more thieves and bandits exist.

Therefore : the sage says –
 I use non-action, and the citizens naturally transform.
 I cherish stillness, and the citizens naturally become
 honest and just.
 I use non-interference, and the citizens naturally become
 wealthy.
 I am without-desire, and the citizens naturally return to the
 state of the uncarved block.

Use honesty and justness when governing a nation.
 Use strange and unusual [tactics] when
 commanding troops².
 ♦Use non-interference² to take hold of the world².
 How do I thus know it is like this ?
 By means of this :
 ♦The world² has many prohibitions and taboos,
 [avoid,shun,abstain]
 ♦And the citizens become even[more] poorer.
 ♦The citizens have many sharp tools^A,
 And the nation and the families grow in confusion.
 The people have too much knowledge and cleverness,
 ♦And strange things begin to increase.
 Matters of law are increasingly proclaimed,
 [things] [made known]
 ♦And more thieves and bandits{traitors} exist.
 Therefore : the sage² says –
 ♦I use non-action, and the citizens naturally transform.
 ♦I cherish stillness, and the citizens naturally become
honest and just. [fond of]
 ♦I use non-interference², and the citizens naturally become
wealthy.
 I am without-desire, and the citizens naturally [return to the
 state of the] uncarved block.

Notes
 A : presumably, weapons

Cross-references
 be honest and just in governing : #8
 honest and just, strange and unusual : #58
 non-interference : #48, #63
 possess or take hold of the world or nation :
 #29, #48, #59, #61
 by using non-interference : #48
 how do I thus know : #21, #54
 by means of this : #21, #54
 sharp tools : #36
 nation and families : #18
 thieves and bandits : #19
 the sage says : #78
 non-action : #2, #3, #37, #38, #43, #48, #63, #64
 stillness : #15, #16, #26, #37, #45, #61
 without-desire : #1, #3, #34, #37
 uncarved block : #15, #19, #28, #32, #37
 uncarved block brings without-desire : #37

Chapter Fifty Nine

治人事天
 莫若嗇
 (●)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
 是謂深根固柢
 長生久視之道●●

When governing people or doing heaven's duties,
It is better to be sparing.

Now : only when you can be sparing,
This is called early acceptance.
Early acceptance is called doubling your accumulation of
De.

With a double accumulation of De,
Then everything can be overcome.
When everything can be overcome,
Then no one knows your limits.
When no one knows your limits,
You can possess the nation.
Possessing the mother of the nation,
You can forever endure.

This is called having a deep source and a firm foundation,
The Way of long life and enduring sight.

◆When governing people or doing heaven's duties,
 ◆It is better² to be sparing. [stingy,thrifty]
Now : only when you can be sparing, [stingy,thrifty]
This is called early acceptance^A. [be convinced,serve]
Early acceptance is called doubling your accumulation of
De. [be convinced,serve] [his]
 With a double accumulation of De,
Then everything² can be overcome.
 When everything² can be overcome,
Then no one knows your limits^B. [his] [utmost,extreme]
 ◆When no one knows your limits^B, [his] [utmost,extreme]
 ◆You can² possess the nation.
 ◆Possessing the mother of the nation,
 ◆You can² forever endure. [for a long time]
This is called having a deep source and a firm foundation,
 ◆The Way of long life and enduring sight. [for a long time]

Notes

A : this is the most literal translation; GUO has
Thus you are prepared in advance [early]
 B : literally "your extremes", *presumably in the sense of*
 "to what extremes you will go" or "how far will you go";
 compare to #58

Cross-references

possess or take hold of the world or nation :
 #29, #48, #57, #61
 mother : #1, #20, #25, #52
 can forever endure : #44

Chapter Sixty

治大國若烹小鮮
 以道莅天下
 其鬼不神
 非其鬼不神•
 其神不傷人•
 非其神不傷人•
 聖人亦不傷人•
 夫兩不相傷
 (•)故德交歸焉

Governing a great nation is like cooking a small fish.

Because Dao is present in the world,
 Its ghosts do not have spirit.

Not that its ghosts do not have any spirit,
 But their spirit does not injure people.

Not only does their spirit not injure people,
 The sage also does not injure people.

Now : since these two do not injure each other,
 Therefore their De merges and returns!

- ◆Governing a great nation is like cooking a small fish.^A
- ◆Because Dao is present in the world²,
- ◆Its ghosts do not have spirit.^B
- ◆Not that its ghosts do not have [any] spirit,
- ◆But their spirit does not injure people.
- ◆Not [only] does their spirit not injure people,
 The sage² also does not injure people.
- ◆Now : since these two do not injure each other,
- ◆Therefore their De merges and returns !
[intersects,exchanges,mixes]

Notes

A : compare this line to the first two lines of the previous chapter and it is easy to see why there has long been speculation that this line should end the previous chapter; however, there is an explicit end-of-chapter marker in GUO #59, and GUO does not even contain this chapter; *essentially this line is saying it is easy to ruin a small fish by overcooking, and it is easy to ruin a nation by over-controlling*

B : first – the “it” is literal, *presumably meaning “the world’s ghosts”*; second – “ghosts” is the most literal, general term, but this could also be referring to demons (or possibly to souls of the ancestors); third – “spirit” might be better thought of in this chapter as “spiritual power”, *thus this line seems to be saying that ghosts do not have any power in the world*; this and the next few lines can be translated in many different ways, due to the multiple meanings of the symbols for “ghost” and “spirit”, and the lack of any reasonable context – *perhaps these lines were addressing some lost ancient scholarly debate or common cultural belief?*

Cross-references

no harm : #35, #56, #58, #66, #81

returning : #14, #16, #19, #20, #22, #25, #28, #34, #40,
 #52, #58, #64, #65, #80

De and returning : #28, #65

Chapter Sixty Four

•其安易持•
 其未兆易謀•
 其脆易泮•
 其微易散•
 為之於未有•
 治之於未亂
 合抱之木生於毫末
 九層之臺起於累土
 千里之行始於足下•
 為者敗之
 執者失之
 是以聖人
 無為故無敗•
 無執故無失•
 民之從事常於幾成而敗之•
 慎終如始
 則無敗事•
 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•

What is peaceful is easy to hold.
 What has not yet been revealed is easy to plan for.
 What is brittle is easy to shatter.
 What is minute is easy to scatter.
 Act on it while it does not yet exist.
 Govern them while they are not yet confused.

A tree too big to embrace is created from the tiniest shoot.
 A terrace of nine stories rises from a pile of dirt.
 A journey of a thousand miles begins from under the feet.

He who acts, ruins it.
 He who grasps, loses it.

Thus the sage :
 Does not act, therefore he does not ruin.
 Does not grasp, therefore he does not lose.

Citizens are always on the verge of achieving their
 undertakings, yet they ruin them.
 Be as careful in the end as if it was the beginning,
 Then you will not ruin your affairs.

Thus the sage :
 Desires to not desire,
 Does not value rare goods,
 Learns to not learn.

He returns to that which everyone else has passed over,
 Thus helping the ten thousand creatures to be naturally so,
 Yet not daring to act.

◆ What is peaceful is easy to hold. [it]

◆ What has not yet been revealed is easy to plan for. [it] [omen,sign,portent]

◆ What is brittle is easy to shatter. [it] [fall apart]

What is minute is easy to scatter. [it]

◆ Act on it while it does not yet exist. [<preposition>]

◆ Govern them while they are not yet confused. [<preposition>]

◆ A tree [←] too big to embrace² is created from the tiniest shoot. [least] [tip,end]

A terrace^A of nine stories rises from a pile of dirt. [soil,land,ground]

A journey of a thousand miles^B begins from under the feet. [travel]

◆ He who acts, ruins it.

◆ He who grasps, loses it.

◆ Thus² the sage² :

◆ Does not act, therefore he does not ruin.

◆ Does not grasp, therefore he does not lose.

Citizens are always on the verge of achieving their undertakings², yet they ruin them. [almost]

Be as careful in the end as if it was the beginning,

Then you will not ruin your affairs.

◆ Thus² the sage² :

◆ Desires to not desire,

◆ Does not value rare² [→] goods,

◆ Learns to not learn.

He returns to that which everyone² else [they] has passed over,

Thus helping the ten thousand creatures [them] to be naturally so²,

Yet not daring to act.^C

Notes

A : in ancient China, terraces were man-made hills with paths cut into in their sides, leading up to a plateau at the top from which to view the surrounding landscape

B : around the time the DDJ was written, a 里 was probably equal to about 1/3 of a mile

C : this line is intentionally left ambiguous as to whether it is the sage or the creatures that do not dare to act, as it is also ambiguous in the original Chinese

Cross-references

he who acts, ruins it : #29

he who grasps, loses it : #29

non-action : #2, #3, #37, #38, #43, #48, #57, #63

rare goods : #3, #12

returning : #14, #16, #19, #20, #22, #25, #28, #34, #40, #52, #58, #60, #65, #80

naturally so : #17, #23, #25, #51

not daring to act : #3, #67, #69

Chapter Sixty Six

江海所以能為百谷王者
以其善下之。
(•)故能為百谷王
是以[聖人]
欲上民。
必以言下之
欲先民。
必以身後之
是以聖人
處上而民不重。
處前而民不害。
是以天下樂推而不厭。
以其不爭。
(•)故天下莫能與之爭

The reason that rivers and seas can act as kings of the 100 valleys
Is because they are good at being lower-than them.
Therefore : they can act as kings of the 100 valleys.

Thus the sage :
In desiring to be above the citizens,
He must by means of his speech be lower-than them.
In desiring to be before the citizens,
He must by means of his self be behind them.

Thus the sage :
Lives above them, but the citizens are not burdened.
Lives in front of them, but the citizens are not harmed.
Thus the world is pleased to promote him, and does not
tire of him.

Because he does not strive,
Therefore no one in the world can strive against him.

The reason that² rivers and seas [they] can act as kings of the 100 valleys
Is because they are good at being lower-than^A them.
Therefore : they can act as kings of the 100 valleys.
Thus² the sage² :
In desiring to be above^B the citizens,
He must by means of his speech be lower-than them.
In desiring to be before^C the citizens,
He must by means of his self be behind them.
Thus² the sage² :
Lives above them, but the citizens are not burdened.
[heavy]
Lives in front of them, but the citizens are not harmed.
Thus² the world² is pleased to promote him, and does not
tire of {despise} him.
Because he does not strive,
◆Therefore no one in the world² can strive against him.
[together with]

Notes
A : literally “below”, “under”, or “inferior”, here “lower-than” is used to indicate taking the lower or inferior position in a relationship (which in ancient Chinese culture was the better thing to do); Lau translates it as “taking the lower position”
B : *presumably, to rule over*
C : *presumably, to lead*

Cross-references
valley : #6, #15, #28, #32, #39, #41
lower-than : #61, #68
before/behind others : #7, #67
self : #7, #9, #13, #16, #26, #44, #52, #54
no harm : #35, #56, #58, #60, #81
not tire of leadership : #72
no striving : #3, #8, #22, #68, #73, #81
no one in the world can strive against him : #22

Chapter Sixty Seven

天下皆謂我一大
似不肖
(●)夫唯(不肖)故[能](大)。
若肖。
久矣其細也(●)
(●)夫我有三寶
持而保之。
一曰慈。
二曰儉
三曰不敢為天下先
慈故能勇
儉故能廣
不敢為天下先
(●)故能成器長。
今舍慈且勇。
舍儉且廣
舍後且先
死矣(●)
(●)夫慈以戰則勝
以守則固
天將救之
以慈衛之

In the world, all say I am great,
But do not seem to be like everyone else.
Now : only because I am not like everyone else, therefore I
can be great.

If I was like everyone else,
Long ago! I would have become insignificant, indeed!

Now : I possess three treasures –
Hold and maintain them.

The first is called compassion,
The second is called economy,
The third is called not daring to act first in the world.

With compassion, you can therefore be brave.
With economy, you can therefore expand.
By not daring to act first in the world,
Therefore you can achieve the capacity for leadership.

At present, people abandon compassion but also try to be
brave,
Abandon economy but also try to expand,
Abandon being behind but also try to be first –
This is death!

Now : when compassion is used in war, the consequence
is victory.
When it is used for protection, the consequence is strength.
When heaven would help you,
Using compassion it protects you.

Chapter Sixty Eight

善為士者不武。
 善戰者不怒。
 善勝敵者不與。
 善用人者為之下。
 是謂不爭之德。
 是謂用人之力。
 是謂配天古之極 [也(•)]

He who is good at being a scholar is not militant.
 He who is good at war does not get angry.
 He who is good at conquering the enemy does not engage them.
 He who is good at making use of people acts lower-than them.

This is called the De of not striving.
 This is called the power of making use of people.
 This is called joining the elite of heaven's ancients, indeed!

◆ He who is good at being a scholar is not militant. [martial,warlike]
 ◆ He who is good at war does not get angry.
 ◆ He who is good at conquering the enemy does not engage them. [victory,beat] [take part in,participate]
 ◆ He who is good at making use of people acts lower-than^A them.
This is called the De of not striving.
This is called the power of making use of people.^B
This is called joining the elite of heaven's ancients, indeed!^C [highest,utmost]

Notes
 A : literally “below”, “under”, or “inferior”, here “lower-than” is used to indicate taking the lower or inferior position in a relationship (which in ancient Chinese culture was the better thing to do); Lau translates it as “taking the lower position”
 B : This could also be translated as This is called using the power of people but based on the sentence two lines before which has no such ambiguity, it is translated this way
 C : the grammar of this sentence is exceptionally difficult to parse, and so can be translated in many different ways

Cross-references
 scholar : #15, #41
 lower-than : #61, #66
 no striving : #3, #8, #22, #66, #73, #81
 the ancients/elders : #14, #15, #22, #38, #39, #62, #65

Chapter Seventy

吾言甚易知。
 甚易行。
 [而]天下莫[之]能知。
 莫[之]能行。
 言有宗。
 事有君
 (•)夫唯無知。
 是以不我知。
 知我者希
 則我者貴[矣(•)]
 是以聖人
 被褐[而]懷玉

My words are very easy to understand,
 Very easy to practice.
 But there is no one in the world who can understand them,
 There is no one who can practice them.

My words possess a lineage,
 My duties possess a ruler.

Now : only because I am without-knowledge,
 Thus I am not understood.
 Those who understand me are rare,
 Consequently I am one who is valued!

Thus the sage wears coarse cloth, but carries jade in his
 heart.

♦My words are very easy to understand,
 ♦Very easy to practice. [perform]
But there is no one in the world² who can understand them,
 [they]
There is no one who can practice them. [they] [perform]
 ♦[My]^A words possess a lineage,
 [My]^A duties possess a ruler.
 ♦Now : only because [I am]^B without-knowledge,
 ♦Thus² I am not understood.
 ♦Those who understand me are rare,
Consequently I am one who is valued !
 ♦Thus² the sage² wears coarse cloth, but carries jade
in his heart.

Notes

A : “My” is inferred here from the first line, but could just
 as reasonably be left out, or “All” substituted
 B : there is no subject in the original Chinese, so this could
 also be saying “only because [the previous two lines] is not
understood”, but because 無知 (without-knowledge) is
 specifically used, it is translated in this way

Cross-references

no one who can practice this : #78
 being valuable : #56, #62

Chapter Seventy One

知不知(尚)[矣(•)]
 不知知病[矣(•)]
 (•)夫唯病病
 是以不病
 聖人不病•
 以其病病•
 是以不病

Knowing that you do not know is honorable!
 Not knowing that you know is a sickness!

Now : only when you are sick of sickness,
 Thus you are not sick.

The sage is not sick
 Because he is sick of sickness.
 Thus he is not sick.

Knowing that you do not know is honorable !
Not knowing that you know is a sickness !
Now : only when you are sick of sickness,
Thus² you are not sick.
 The sage² is not sick
 ♦Because he is sick of sickness.
 ♦Thus² he is not sick.

Notes

The third and fourth lines are not in the MWD's

This chapter can be translated many different ways due to its terseness and the many ways to interpret 病 (disease, sickness, to be ill)

“Sickness” here presumably refers to the suffering that comes from not following Dao

Cross-references

Chapter Seventy Three

• 勇於敢

則殺

勇於不敢

則活

此兩者或利或害

天之所惡孰知其故

是以聖人猶難之

天之道

不爭而善勝•

不言而善應•

不召而自來

繹然而善謀

天網恢恢

疏而不失

When your courage lies in daring,

The consequence is killing.

When your courage lies in not daring,

The consequence is survival.

These two choices, they sometimes cause benefit,
sometimes cause harm.

That which heaven detests – who knows its reasons?

The Way of heaven :

Does not strive, yet skillfully achieves its goals.

Does not speak, yet skillfully responds.

Does not summon, yet everything naturally comes to it.

Is certainly unhurried, yet skillfully prepares.

Heaven's net is extremely vast;

It is wide meshed, yet does not fail.

◆When your courage* lies in daring,

◆The consequence is killing.

◆When your courage* lies in not daring,

◆The consequence is survival.

◆These two [choices], they sometimes cause benefit,
sometimes cause harm.

[maybe,perhaps] [maybe,perhaps]

◆That which heaven [it] detests^A – who knows its reasons?

Thus² the sage² plans for things to be difficult.^B

[them] [schemes]

◆The Way of heaven :

◆Does not strive, yet skillfully achieves its goals.

[victory,beat]

◆Does not speak, yet skillfully responds.

◆Does not summon, yet everything naturally comes to it.

Is certainly unhurried, yet skillfully prepares.^C

[slow,patient,calm] [plans]

◆Heaven's net is extremely vast^{2D};

◆It is wide meshed, yet does not fail.

[spare]

Notes

There are two themes in this chapter which do not seem to fit in with typical Daoist concepts – that of heaven conquering (literally “victory” or “beat”, interpreted as “achieving its goals”) which sounds more like striving than non-action, and planning (interpreted as “prepares”) which seems contradictory to being “naturally so” (although the sage also “plans” here and in #63)

A : *in early societies, whatever endeavors failed were by definition what heaven (or the gods) “detested”*

B : this sentence only appears in the later sources, and seems to be a parenthetical comment; although it technically is in the majority, it seems so out-of-place that it is left out of the final translation above

C : this sentence is nearly impossible to translate; while the first symbol in WB and HSG are the same, making them the default “majority”, it is different in every other source, and none of their modern translations make sense; some translators use a symbol slightly different than that in WB and HSG but pronounced the same way; finally, “slow, patient, calm” is only the most likely translation that could be found for the first symbol

D : “extremely” is implied by the repeated symbol

Cross-references

the sage plans for difficulties : #63

Way of heaven : #9, #47, #77, #79, #81

no striving : #3, #8, #22, #66, #68, #81

Chapter Seventy Four

民不畏死
 奈何以死懼之。
 若使民常畏死
 而為奇者吾得執而殺之。
 孰敢。
 常有司殺者 —
 (•)夫代司殺者殺。
 是謂代大匠斲。
 (•)夫代大匠斲者
 希 — 不傷其手矣(•)

If the citizens do not fear death,
 How can you use death to frighten them?
 Assuming you could ensure that the citizens always fear
 death,
 And I get hold of those who act strange and unusual and
 kill them,
 Then who would be daring?

 There will always exist an executioner.
 Now : to take the place of the executioner to do the
 killing,
 This is called taking the place of a great craftsman to carve
 wood.
 Now : of those who take the place of a great craftsman to
 carve wood,
 Few will not injure their hand!

If the citizens do not fear death,
How² can you use death to frighten them?
Assuming you could ensure that the citizens always fear
death, [make.cause]
And I get hold of those who act strange and unusual and
kill them,
 Then who would be daring{bold}?
 There will always exist an executioner^{3A}.
 [he who attends to/manages killing]
 ◆Now : to take the place of the executioner³ to do the
killing, [he who attends to/manages killing]
This is called taking the place of a great craftsman to
carve wood.
 ◆Now : of those who take the place of a great craftsman to
carve wood,
 Few will not injure their hand ! [rare.infrequent]

Notes
 A : *it is speculated by some that this refers to heaven or
 Dao, and while that does make sense in context of the lines
 that follow, there is no direct support for it in the original
 Chinese*

Cross-references
 fear/afraid : #15, #17, #20, #72
 citizens do not fear : #72
 die/death : #6, #33, #42, #50, #67, #75, #76, #80
 citizens do not fear death, take death seriously/lightly :
 #75, #80

Chapter Seventy Five

• 民之饑 •
 以其上食稅之多 •
 是以饑
 民之難治 •
 以其上之有為 •
 是以難治 •
 民之輕死 •
 以其求生之厚 •
 是以輕死
 (•) 夫唯無以生為者
 是賢於貴生 •

The citizens are hungry
 Because their superiors eat too much of their taxes.
 Thus they are hungry.

The citizens are hard to govern
 Because their superiors are compelled to take action.
 Thus they are hard to govern.

The citizens take death lightly
 Because they seek the substance of life.
 Thus they take death lightly.

Now : only he who has no use for being alive
 Is virtuous compared to he who values living.

The citizens [they] are hungry
 Because their superiors eat too much of their taxes.^A
 Thus² they are hungry.
 The citizens [they] are hard to govern
 Because their superiors [they] are compelled to take
action^B. [possess]
 Thus² they are hard to govern.
 ♦The citizens [they] take death lightly
 Because they^C seek the substance^D of life.
 ♦Thus² they take death lightly.
 Now : only he who has no use for being alive
Is virtuous compared to [he who] values living.^E

Notes
 A : taxes were taken in grain at the time the DDJ was written, so this seems to be something of a play on words
 B : literally, they “possess action”
 C : HSG and FY have
 Because their superiors seek the substance of life
 thus placing the blame not on the people, but those who govern them (WB used the viewpoint of the earlier sources)
 D : compare to #38, where living for the “substance” is apparently a good thing, and #50, where it is a bad thing
 E : *one who “values living” will be less virtuous than one who does not, because the former is out to get what he can for himself*

Cross-references
 citizens are hard to govern : #65
 die/death : #6, #33, #42, #50, #67, #74, #76, #80
 citizens do not fear death, take death seriously/lightly :
 #74, #80
 substance : #38, #50, #55

Chapter Seventy Six

•人之生也柔弱
其死也堅強•
萬物草木之生也柔脆
其死也枯槁•
(•)故堅強者死之徒•
柔弱者生之徒•
是以兵強則不勝
木強則兵•
強大處下•
柔弱處上

The people are born (indeed!) soft and weak.
They die (indeed!) hard and inflexible.
The ten thousand creatures, the grass and trees, are born
(indeed!) soft and fragile.
They die (indeed!) dried and withered.

Therefore : that which is hard and inflexible is a follower
of death.
That which is soft and weak is a follower of life.

Thus if a weapon is inflexible, the consequence is defeat.
If a tree is inflexible, then it snaps.

Inflexible and great dwell below.
Soft and weak dwell above.

◆The people [they] are born (indeed!) soft and weak.
They die (indeed!) hard and inflexible.
The ten thousand creatures, the grass and trees, [they] are
born (indeed!) soft and fragile.
◆They die (indeed!) dried and withered.
Therefore : that which is hard and inflexible is a follower^A
of death.
That which is soft and weak is a follower of life.
Thus² if a weapon is inflexible, the consequence is defeat².^B
[not victory]

If a tree is inflexible, then it snaps^o.
Inflexible and great dwell below^C.
Soft and weak dwell above.

Notes
A : “follower” as in disciple or one who agrees with a particular way of looking at things
B : *an inflexible weapon shatters easily*; this line can be translated in many ways, because “weapon is inflexible” can also mean
weapon is strong
army is inflexible
army is strong
C : interestingly, this is the same symbol translated in #61, #66, and #68 as “lower-than” (which was a good thing), so in this case it is the inferior qualities which are lower-than

Cross-references
soft : #10, #36, #43, #52, #55, #78
weak : #3, #29, #36, #40, #55, #78
die/death : #6, #33, #42, #50, #67, #74, #75, #80
hard : #36, #43, #78
follower of death *and* follower of life : #50

Chapter Seventy Seven

天之道其猶張弓與。
 高者抑之。
 下者舉之。
 有餘者損之。
 不足者補之。
 天之道
 損有餘而補不足
 人之道則不然
 損不足以奉有餘
 孰能有餘(而)奉[於]天下
 唯有道者。
 是以聖人
 為而不恃
 功成而不處。
 其不欲見賢。

The Way of heaven, how it is just like stretching a bow?
 He who is high is pressed down by it.
 He who is low is lifted by it.
 He who has excess is reduced by it.
 He who does not have enough is filled by it.

The Way of heaven
 Reduces what has excess and fills what does not have
 enough.
 The Way of people on the other hand is not like this,
 And takes from those who do not have enough in order to
 offer it to those who have too much.

Who can have too much and offer it to the world?
 Only he who possesses Dao.

Thus the sage :
 Acts, but is not concerned with the results.
 Accomplishes his tasks, but does not dwell on them.
 He does not desire to display his virtue.

The Way of heaven, how it is just like stretching a bow ?
He who is high is pressed down by it.
He who is low is lifted by it.
He who has excess is reduced by it. [decrease]
He who does not have enough is filled by it.
 The Way of heaven
Reduces what has excess and fills what does not have
enough. [decrease]
 The Way of people on the other hand is not like this,
 [<contrast>]
 And takes from [those who] do not have enough in order to
offer it to [those who] have too much.
 [decreases] [excess]
Who can have too much and offer it to the world? [excess]
Only he who possesses Dao.
Thus² the sage² :
Acts, but is not concerned with [the results].
 [depend upon, rely upon]
Accomplishes his tasks, but does not dwell on them.
 [results, achievements]
He does not desire to display his virtue. [show]

Notes

Cross-references

Way of heaven : #9, #47, #73, #79, #81
 he who “possesses Dao” : #15, #23, #24, #31, #65
 acting but not concerned : #2, #10, #51
 accomplishing tasks : #2, #9, #17, #34
 and not dwelling on them : #2, #9
 not displaying oneself (showing off) : #22, #24, #47, #72

Chapter Seventy Eight

天下莫柔弱於水
而攻堅強者
莫之能勝。
以其無以易之。
弱之勝強。
柔之勝剛。
天下莫不知。
莫能行。
是以聖人云。
受國之垢
是謂社稷[之]主
受國[之]不祥
是謂天下[之]王
正言若反。

In the world, nothing is softer and weaker than water.
Yet for attacking that which is hard and strong,
There is nothing that can surpass it.
This is because it endlessly replaces itself.

Weakness conquers strength.
Softness conquers hardness.
In the world, there is no one who does not know this,
But there is no one who can practice it.

Thus the sage says :
Accepting upon oneself the disgrace of the nation
Is called being master of the shrines.
Accepting upon oneself the misfortune of the nation
Is called being king of the world.

Honest words seem contrary.

◆In the world², nothing is softer and weaker than water.
◆Yet for attacking that which is hard and strong,
◆There is nothing that can surpass it. [them]
◆This is because it endlessly² replaces {changes} it[self].^A
Weakness [it] conquers strength. [victorious,beats]
Softness [it] conquers hardness. [victorious,beats]
In the world², there is no one who does not know this,
But there is no one who can practice it. [perform]
Thus² the sage² says :
Accepting [upon oneself] the disgrace of the nation
Is called being master of the shrines^{2B}.
Accepting [upon oneself] the misfortune² of the nation
[not lucky]
Is called being king of the world².
◆Honest words seem contrary.

Notes

A : the grammar of this sentence is very difficult to parse; I do not know if 無以 meant “endlessly” when the DDJ was written, but this is the only translation that seems to make sense

B : the symbols specifically refer to the shrine of the god of soil, and the shrine of the god of grain

Cross-references

soft : #10, #36, #43, #52, #55, #76

weak : #3, #29, #36, #40, #55, #76

hard : #36, #43, #76

strong : #3, #29, #30, #33, #36, #52, #55, #67

soft conquers hard : #36, #43

no one who can practice it : #70

the sage says : #57

Chapter Seventy Nine

和 大 怨
 必 有 餘 怨 •
 安 可 以 為 善
 是 以 聖 人
 執 左 契
 而 不 責 於 人
 [(•)故] 有 德 司 契
 無 德 司 徹
 天 道 無 親
 常 與 善 人

Harmonize a great resentment,
 And there must exist some remaining resentment.
 How can this be considered good?

Thus the sage :
 Holds the left side of an agreement,
 But does not demand payment of people.

Therefore : to have De is to take charge of your
 agreements;
 To be without De is to take charge of taking away from
 others.

The Way of heaven, while without favor,
 Is always with virtuous people.

- ◆ Harmonize a great resentment,
- ◆ And there must exist some remaining resentment.
- ◆ How can this be considered² good?
- ◆ Thus² the sage² :
Holds the left side^A of an agreement,
But does not demand [payment] of people.
Therefore : to have De is to take charge of your
agreements;
- ◆ To be without De is to take charge of taking away from
others.
- ◆ The Way of heaven, while without favor,
- ◆ Is always [together]with virtuous people.^B

Notes

The point of the beginning of this chapter seems to be that the sage does not create resentments in the first place
 A : Lau says that the left side of a contract or agreement was the creditor's side, so the sage is the one who is owed
 B : Hatcher points out that while the Way of heaven itself is without favor, virtuous people have aligned themselves with it (because of their virtue), hence it is "with" them

Cross-references

Way of heaven : #9, #47, #73, #77, #81

Appendix – Different Layers of the Dao De Jing

While translating the DDJ, I discovered John Emerson’s articles on the possibility of various “layers” within it, based on the presence or absence of certain symbols and “themes” in each chapter. While he was not the first to suggest the presence of multiple layers, of particular interest to me was his comment : “Many of the objections to my method seemed to be objections to the kinds of rough, empirical, non-algorithmic methods best used to disentangle historically confused material.” Having a background in something called pattern recognition, I decided to find out whether or not each chapter could be classified as belonging to these layers based on this purely analytical method.

Emerson tentatively identified Early, Middle, Late, Added (very small) and Post-Guodian layers. By definition, the Post-Guodian layer contains at least chapters 67-81, none of which appear in the Guodian source. Building on Emerson’s work, extensive analysis using pattern recognition methods based on the relative frequencies of the symbols in each chapter indicates that the most self-consistent results are obtained when the DDJ is separated into three layers of chapters :

Early : 1 4 5 6 7 9 10 13 14 15 16 20 21 23 24 25 28 30 31 32 34 35 37 39 41 44 51 52 55 56

Late : 3 8 12 17 18 19 22 27 29 38 45 46 47 48 49 53 54 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66

Post-Guodian : 11 26 33 36 40 42 43 50 67-81

Mixed : 2

Excluding the chapters he identified as Middle (which ended up being assigned very evenly across the other three layers), none of these completely disagree with Emerson’s assignments (except for 52, which is the only entire chapter he considered to be Added), although he assigns some sections of some chapters to other layers. While a significant majority (85%) of the chapters were strongly identified as belonging to their layer (the underlined chapters above), the pattern recognition process did indicate that a few (most notably chapters 24, 45, 46, 59, and 62, and to a lesser extent 8, 22, 30, 39, 44, and 49) may have elements of more than one layer present within them.

Note that while Emerson’s names (Early, Late, Post-Guodian) are kept for convenience, they don’t necessarily have to indicate separation in time – they could perhaps represent different oral traditions, or sayings that originally developed in different regions of China, which combined to form the Dao De Jing we know today. Also note that the Guodian document (~300 BCE) consists of chapters from both Early and Late in roughly equal numbers, so this “layering” actually happened very early.

Although chapter 40 was identified as being strongly Post-Guodian, it is present in the Guodian manuscript, but that is not considered a major problem. For example, if perhaps the post-Guodian “style” was already being developed at the time the Guodian document was created, then the presence of chapter 40 in the document could mean that it had already been written in this style, perhaps shortly before the Guodian document was created, whereas chapters 68-81 had yet to be written (or the Guodian compiler was not aware of their existence). There are probably many other scenarios that could explain such a result.

Chapter 2 was variously classified as belonging to all three layers, but the symbol distributions (below) simultaneously indicated that it cannot belong to any of them! If any chapter is truly a mixture of layers, it is this one (which Emerson agrees with), so it is not assigned to any.

With the chapters separated as given above, it is possible to identify which symbols are used more often in one layer than another, as shown in the table below. Each line represents one symbol, and shows its various English meanings (as used in this translation). “Weak” symbols show up three to six times more often in the indicated layer than the other two, while “Strong” symbols show up more than six times more often. Within these sections, symbols are ordered from the least unbalanced to most unbalanced distributions between the layers. “Unique” symbols show up only in that layer, and not even once in the others. In these sections, words are

listed from fewest appearances to most appearances. Weak and Strong symbols must show up in at least five chapters to be included, while Unique symbols must be in at least three chapters. Phrases (two or more symbols) are shown in italics. Some punctuation symbols are included as they tend to show differences in grammatical conventions between the layers. Where two symbols are consistently translated into the same punctuation, (#1) and (#2) are used to distinguish between them.

	Mostly Early	Mostly Late	Mostly Post-Guodian
Weak	valley call, say, speak return self deep mystery, deep and mysterious mother child, children fill, full maintain, protect	<i>do not act</i> truth, honest, trust* affairs, duties, trouble honest and just <i>non-action</i> kind, kindness* wise, wisdom* heart/mind	strong, inflexible, try originally, undoubtedly, firm, strong soft, softness, yielding dare, daring <i>Dao of</i>
Strong	! (#1) name, fame, reputation	choose, take, take hold of 100	weak, weakness victory, conquer die, death
Unique	? (#1) army blended, mingled pure and clear clear, pure, bright <i>newborn infant</i> hard work unfortunate, bad nobles (specifically Marquis) within, middle exist, survive, keep disgrace <i>without-name</i> same, sameness stop, rest, stay ? (#2) <i>no danger</i> gateway image <i>heaven & earth</i>	<i>rare goods</i> abandon <i>non-interference</i> family morality* clever, skillful bandit, evil thief, robbery confuse, confusion	treasure hard teach, teaching

The symbol for “die, death” that is strongly Post-Guodian is in only one non-Post-Guodian chapter (6, where the “spirit of the valley does not die”). All of the other 17 times (!) it is used is in Post-Guodian chapters, so if it wasn’t for the one use in chapter 6, this symbol would be strongly unique to the Post-Guodian chapters.

Symbols that show up much more often in two layers but rarely in the other one are presented in the table on the following page, in the same format as the previous one. Symbols in the “Never” sections appear about equally often in the other two layers, but not once in the indicated layer.

“Dao” is *almost* three times more likely to appear in Early and Late than Post-Guodian (and there almost always as “Dao of”), but not quite enough to make it into the following table (under “Rarely in Post-Guodian”).

Besides the symbol distributions, it is interesting to note that of the six chapters in which the majority of the sources are anti-Confucian, all but chapter 33 are Late (and it is Post-Guodian) – thus none of the Early chapters are anti-Confucian. Also, the anti-military chapters (30, 31) are Early, while the chapters offering military advice (68, 69) are Post-Guodian. Finally, “living for the substance” is a good thing in chapter 38 (Late), but a bad thing in chapters 50 and 75 (both Post-Guodian).

Early chapters are more concerned with heaven and earth, images of the feminine and the child, the concepts of “without-name” and “no danger”, and are the only chapters that try to describe Dao (1, 4, 14, 21, 25, 32, 34, 35), while they have little to do with the sage (only twice using “thus the sage” in 30 chapters), governing the nation, easy vs. difficult, and never mention the concept of “not striving”.

	Rarely in Early	Rarely in Late	Rarely in Post-Guodian
Weak	govern behavior, perform, travel virtue, good(ness), skilled ! (#2) <i>sage</i>	weapons who, which ready, would, about to, general create, life, produce one	De
Strong	benefit, profit, sharp nation citizens <i>thus the sage</i>		
Never	<i>virtuous person</i> misfortune serious, double easy <i>do not strive</i> difficult, hard	Qi good fortune scholar since, once maintain, protect master depend on, concerned with rare, few <i>do not know</i>	<i>100 families</i> female ocean, sea subtle mystery spirit bright, brightness empty arise, make move, movement, action begin, beginning arise, produce, go out ! ,? uncarved block not (非)

Late chapters have more Confucian terms, advice on how to rule, and talk about non-interference, but at the same time are the only ones that talk about possessing or “taking hold of” the world or the nation.

Post-Guodian chapters also offer some advice on how to rule, tend to deal with hard/soft/weak/strong, are the only chapters that offer military advice, and talk a lot about death, but rarely mention Dao or De, and never mention the feminine, the child, emptiness, or the uncarved block.

The rest of the appendix collects all the chapters of each layer together, so the reader can see their common themes. The final section is called “What Would the Sage Do?”, and collects every reference to the Sage from the entire document.

References

A Stratification of Lao Tzu, by John J. Emerson; The Journal of Chinese Religions, #23, pp. 1-28; 1995
Lao Tzu Stratified, II: A Sketch, by John J. Emerson; <http://www.idiocentrism.com/china.strata3.htm>; 2003

Early

One

The Dao that can be spoken of is not the ever-constant Dao.

The name that can be named is not the ever-constant name.

That which is without-name is the beginning of heaven and earth.

That which possesses a name is the mother of the ten thousand creatures.

Therefore : always without-desire, thus you observe its subtle mystery.

Always possessing desires, thus you observe its external appearances.

These two, they arise from the same source but have different names;

This sameness is called their deep mystery.

Deep mysteries, and again deep mysteries –
The gateway of many subtle mysteries.

Four

Dao is like a cup or bowl, yet use it and there exists no need to fill it.

Profound and deep!, it appears to be the ancestor of the ten thousand creatures.

It blunts their sharpness,
Loosens their tangles,
Softens their brightness,
Makes them the same as the dust of the world.

Deep and profound!, it seems to barely exist.
I do not know whose child it is –
Its image came before that of god.

Five

Heaven and earth are not kind –
Thus the ten thousand creatures become as straw dogs to them.

The sage is not kind –
Thus the 100 families become as straw dogs to him.

The space between heaven and earth,
How is it just like a bellows or flute?
It is empty, yet does not run out.
The more it moves, and the more it produces.

Too much talking is exceptionally exhausting,
Which is not as good as maintaining what is within.

Six

The spirit of the valley does not die –
It is called the deep and mysterious feminine.

The gateway of this deep and mysterious feminine –
It is called the source of heaven and earth.

Unbroken, it seems to exist.
Using it takes no effort.

Seven

Heaven is eternal, earth is enduring.
The reason that heaven and earth can be eternal and enduring
Is because they do not live for themselves.
Therefore they can live forever.

Thus the sage :
Puts his self behind others, yet finds his self before them.
Considers his self extraneous, yet his self survives.

Is this not because he has no self-interests?
Therefore he can achieve his self-interests.

Nine

Holding and filling it
Are not as good as your stopping short.

Hammering and sharpening it
Can not be forever maintained.

When gold and jade fill a room,
There is no one who can protect it.

To have wealth and high rank, but with arrogance –
Then naturally their loss is your own fault.

When the task is successful, the self should let go of it.
This is the Way of heaven.

Early

Ten

Carrying and managing a body while embracing the One,
Are you able to not separate them?
Concentrating your Qi to become soft,
Are you able to be like a newborn infant?
Cleansing and clearing your deep and mysterious
perception,
Are you able to be without blemish?
Loving the citizens and governing the nation,
Are you able to use non-action?
Opening and closing the gateway of heaven,
Are you able to serve as the feminine?
Attaining clear insight in all directions,
Are you able to not use your knowledge?

Creating them and raising them,
Creating but not possessing,
Acting but not concerned with the results,
Leading yet not governing –
This is called deep and mysterious De.

Thirteen

Favor and disgrace seem alarming.
High rank brings great suffering if you have a self.

What is meant by “favor and disgrace seem alarming”?
Favor makes you the inferior, so gaining it seems
alarming.
Losing it also seems alarming.
This is what is meant by “favor and disgrace seem
alarming”.

What is meant by “high rank brings great suffering if
you have a self”?
I am the reason that I have great suffering, I who act like
I have a self.
When I am without a self, how could I have suffering?

Therefore : he who is high ranking and uses his self to
serve the world –
It seems he can thus be entrusted with the world!
He who is loving and uses his self to serve the world –
It seems he can thus be entrusted with the world!

Fourteen

Look, it is not seen; its name is called elusive.
Listen, it is not heard; its name is called tenuous.
Grasp, it is not gotten; its name is called subtle and
obscure.
These three things can not be investigated any further –
Therefore they blend and become one.

This one thing :
Its highest point is not bright;
Its lowest point is not dark.
Continuous and unending!, it can not be named;
It returns to non-existence.
It is called the form of that which is without-form;
The image of non-existence.
It is called confusing and indistinct.
Meet it and you do not see its beginning;
Follow it and you do not see its end.

Hold fast to the Way of the ancients
In order to master the present moment.
The ability to know the ancient beginning –
This is called the main principle of Dao.

Fifteen

The virtue of the ancients made them who were scholars
subtle, mysterious, obscure, deep, and penetrating.
Their mysterious depths can not be understood.

Now : only because they can not be understood,
Therefore we try to emulate their appearance :
Hesitant!, as if crossing a winter stream.
Wary!, as if afraid of their neighbors all around.
Respectful!, they are like a visiting guest.
Yielding!, like ice that is about to break off.
Honest and genuine!, they are like the uncarved block.
Wide and open!, they are like a valley.
Unclear!, they are like muddy water.

Who can take muddy water and use stillness to slowly
and
gently make it pure and clear?
Who can take what is tranquil and use continual
movement
to slowly and gently bring it to life?

He who maintains this Way does not desire to be full.
Now : only because he is not full,
Thus he can be hidden and unfinished.

Early

Sixteen

Attain the utmost emptiness.
Maintain a profound stillness.

The ten thousand creatures arise in unison,
And thus I observe their return.
Now : all the myriad creatures return to their source.
Returning to the source speaks of stillness.
Stillness is called returning to the natural order.
Returning to the natural order speaks of the
ever-constant.

Knowing the ever-constant speaks of insight.
Not knowing the ever-constant is foolish and creates
misfortune.

Knowing the ever-constant leads to tolerance.
Being tolerant leads to being just and unbiased.
Being just and unbiased leads to being kingly.
Being kingly leads to heaven.
Heaven leads to Dao.
Dao leads to what endures.

When the self disappears, there can be no danger.

Twenty

Renounce learning and be without worry.

“Yes” together with “yeah” –
What is their mutual distance or nearness?
Beautiful together with ugliness –
What is their mutual distance or similarity?

That which people fear, they are not able to not fear.
How ridiculous! They are not yet centered!

Everyone is very festive,
As if enjoying the Tai Lao sacrifice,
As if climbing terraces in the spring.
I alone am unmoved! –
Like one who has not yet given any sign,
Like a newborn infant who does not yet act like a baby.
Very tired and worn out!, as if without a place to return
to.

Everyone all has more than they need;
I alone seem to have lost everything.
I have the heart/mind of a foolish person, indeed!!
I am very mixed up and confused!

Common people are very clear and bright;
I alone seem confused.
Common people are very observant and alert;
I alone am very gloomy and depressed.
Tranquil!, they are like the ocean;
I drift on the wind!, as if without a place to rest.
Everyone all has a purpose;
I alone am stupid and stubborn, and appear mean and
shallow.

I alone am different compared to other people,
And value the food of the mother.

Twenty one

The greatest De is possible only when Dao is followed.

The action of Dao on creatures is just indistinct, just
confusing.
Confusing! and indistinct!, within it exists image.
Indistinct! and confusing!, within it exists things.
Obscure! and dark!, within it exists essence.
Its essence is extremely real and true.
Within it exists truth.

From the present reaching to antiquity,
Its name has not departed –
Thus I observe the father of the multitudes.
How do I thus know the father of the multitudes is like
this?
By means of this.

Early

Twenty three

Minimal words are naturally so.
Therefore : strong winds do not last the entire morning,
Sudden rains do not last the entire day.

Who makes these things? Heaven and earth.
Even heaven and earth can not maintain them forever,
And so how much less can people?

Therefore : of those who engage in Dao –
He who Daos is one with Dao.
He who Des is one with De.
He who loses is one with the loss.

For he who is one with Dao,
Dao is also pleased to have him.
For he who is one with De,
De is also pleased to have him.
For he who is one with loss,
Loss is also pleased to have him.

If you do not trust enough, then you will not have
anyone's trust.

Twenty four

He who stands on tiptoe does not really stand.
He who stands astride can not travel.
He who displays himself does not have insight.
He who considers himself correct does not distinguish
himself.
He who boasts about himself is without merit.
He who brags about himself does not endure.

He who lives in Dao –
Calls these leftover food and unnecessary behavior.
Creatures detest them, no matter what.
Therefore : he who possesses Dao does not live by them.

Twenty five

Something existed unformed yet complete,
Before heaven and earth were created.
Silent! Empty!
Standing alone, not changing.
It circulates everywhere, and causes no danger.
It can be considered the mother of the world.

I do not know its name;
Its symbol is called Dao.
If I tried to make its name, I would call it great.
Being great speaks of departing.
Departing speaks of being remote.
Being remote speaks of returning.

Dao is great,
Heaven is great,
Earth is great,
The king is also great.
Within the realm exist four that are great,
And the king resides as one of them!

People follow the earth.
The earth follows heaven.
Heaven follows Dao.
Dao follows what is naturally so.

Twenty eight

Know your maleness, but maintain your femaleness.
Serve as a stream to the world.
Serving as a stream to the world,
The ever-constant De will not depart,
Returning you to the state of the newborn infant.

Know your brightness, but maintain your darkness.
Serve as an example to the world.
Serving as an example to the world,
The ever-constant De will not falter,
Returning you to the state of the limitless.

Know your honor, but maintain your disgrace.
Serve as a valley to the world.
Serving as a valley to the world,
The ever-constant De will then be sufficient,
Returning you to the state of the uncarved block.

When the uncarved block is broken up, then it becomes
tools.
When the sage uses it, then he becomes the senior
government official.
Therefore : the greatest cutting does not divide.

Early

Thirty

He who uses Dao to assist the master of the people
Does not use weapons or strength on the world,
For his troubles would likely return –
In the dwelling places of armies, thorns and brambles are
produced,
And so what is left behind a great army must have a bad
year.

He who has virtue gets results and stops.
He does not dare to take by using strength.
He gets results, but never brags.
Gets results, but never boasts.
Gets results, but is not arrogant.
Gets results, but only when he has no choice.
Gets results, but never uses strength.

When creatures are robust but old,
This is called “not Dao”.
That which is “not Dao” has an early finish.

Thirty one

Now : fine weapons, they are not tools of good fortune.
Creatures detest them, no matter what.
Therefore : he who possesses Dao does not live by them.
When a noble man is in his dwelling, then he honors the
left.
When he commands troops, then he honors the right.

Weapons, they are not tools of good fortune.
They are not the tools of a noble man.
When he has no choice but to use them,
To be calm and indifferent is superior –
Never pleased, indeed!
And he who is pleased enjoys killing people.

Now : he who enjoys killing people
Can not get what he desires from the world!

Therefore : in fortunate affairs honor the left,
In unfortunate affairs honor the right.
Thus the assistant general of the army resides on the left,
The supreme general of the army resides on the right.

Thus we say they are dwelling at a funeral :
When many people are killed,
Then mourn and weep with grief for them.
Victory in war thus means they will dwell at a funeral.

Thirty two

Dao is ever-constantly without-name.

Even though the concept of the uncarved block seems
insignificant,
No one in the world can conquer it.
If nobles and kings could maintain it,
The ten thousand creatures would naturally obey.
Heaven and earth would join with each other,
Thus dropping a sweet dew.
There are no citizens who would make this happen,
Yet it would be naturally fair and impartial.

And so, begin to divide and you have names.
Once names exist,
Men should also be ready to know when to stop.
Knowing when to stop is the reason that there is no
danger.

An analogy for the action of Dao in the world :
It is similar to a stream in a valley that becomes part of a
large river or ocean.

Thirty four

Great Dao is like a vast flood!
It is able to flow left and right.

The ten thousand creatures depend on it in order for life,
And are not rejected.
It accomplishes its tasks successfully,
Yet does not possess a name.
It clothes and supports the ten thousand creatures,
But does not act as their master.

Therefore : since it is ever-constantly without-desire,
It can then be named insignificant.

Since the ten thousand creatures return to it
But it does not act as their master,
It can then be named great.

Thus the sage can achieve greatness
Because he does not act great.
Therefore he can achieve greatness.

Early

Thirty five

Holding fast to the great image,
The entire world comes towards you.
Comes towards you, and meeting with no harm,
There is the greatest peace and calm.

Music together with good food make passing guests stay,
But Dao's words are bland!
They are without flavor.

Look for it, there is not enough to see.
Listen for it, there is not enough to hear.
Use it, there is not enough to exhaust.

Thirty seven

Dao ever-constantly resides in non-action,
Yet nothing is left undone.

If nobles and kings could maintain it,
The ten thousand creatures would naturally transform.
Transform, and if desire arises,
I would restrain it by means of the nameless uncarved
block.

In the state of the nameless uncarved block,
Men also would be without-desire.
Not desiring, thus they would be still –
And the world would naturally settle.

Thirty nine

Of those who in ancient times attained oneness :
Heaven attained oneness, thus becoming pure and clear.
Earth attained oneness, thus becoming stable.
Spirit attained oneness, thus becoming potent.
The valley attained oneness, thus becoming full.
The ten thousand creatures attained oneness, thus
becoming alive.
Nobles and kings attained oneness, thus serving the
world faithfully.
They attained it.

If heaven could not use its purity and clarity,
I fear it would split apart.
If earth could not use its stability,
I fear it would erupt.
If spirit could not use its potency,
I fear it would cease to be.
If the valley could not use its fullness,
I fear it would be used up.
If the ten thousand creatures could not use their life,
I fear they would be destroyed.
If nobles and kings could not use their high rank and
prominence,
I fear they would fall.

Therefore : humility thus serves as the source of high
rank;
Low thus serves as the foundation of high.
Thus nobles and kings call themselves orphaned, lonely,
and unlucky.
Does this not mean that humility thus serves as the
source?
Does it not?

Therefore : to attain exceptional popularity is to be
without popularity –
Do not desire to be scarce like jade,
But common like rock.

Early

Forty one

The superior scholar hearing of Dao works hard and practices it.

The average scholar hearing of Dao seems to keep it, seems to lose it.

The inferior scholar hearing of Dao laughs greatly at it. If he did not laugh, it would not be qualified to be Dao.

Therefore : in the established sayings that exist, it is said –

Insight into Dao seems like darkness.

Advancing in Dao seems like retreating.

Smooth Dao seems knotted.

Superior De seems like a valley.

The greatest purity seems like disgrace.

The most extensive De seems like it is not enough.

Established De seems aimless.

Real and true character seems inconsistent.

The greatest region is without borders.

The greatest vessel is last to be completed.

The greatest tone is a tenuous sound.

The greatest image is without-form.

Dao is hidden and without-name.

Now : only Dao is good at beginning and also good at completing.

Forty four

Fame and self : which do you love?

Self and property : which is greater?

Gain and loss : which is the affliction?

Extreme desire must lead to great expense.

Collecting too much must lead to substantial loss.

Knowing when you have enough, there can be no disgrace.

Knowing when to stop, there can be no danger.

Then you can forever endure.

Fifty one

Dao creates them,

De raises them,

Things shape them,

Circumstances complete them.

Thus among the ten thousand creatures,

There are none who do not respect Dao and honor De.

Respect of Dao,

Honor of De –

Now : there is no one who commands this,

Yet it is always naturally so.

Therefore : Dao creates them, De raises them.

Leads them, nourishes them,

Shelters them, heals them,

Supports them, protects them.

Creating but not possessing,

Acting but not concerned with the results,

Leading yet not governing –

This is called deep and mysterious De.

Fifty two

The world had a beginning,

Which can be considered the mother of the world.

Once you have realized its mother,

You thus know her children.

Once you know her children,

Return to and maintain their mother.

When the self disappears, there can be no danger.

Block your senses, close your gateway –

All your life you will not struggle.

Open your senses, be successful in your duties –

All your life you will not have relief.

Seeing the insignificant speaks of insight.

Maintaining softness speaks of strength.

Use your brightness to return to your insight.

Do not lose your self in misfortune.

This is called practicing the ever-constant.

Early

Fifty five

He who embodies the substance of De
Can be compared to a newborn child :
Wasps, scorpions, snakes, and serpents do not sting him,
Fierce beasts do not seize him,
Birds of prey do not claw him.
His bones are weak, his muscles are soft, yet his grasp is
firm and strong.
He has not yet known the union of female and male, yet
his penis rises.
He has the utmost essence, indeed!
He cries the entire day yet does not get hoarse.
He has the utmost harmony, indeed!

Knowing harmony speaks of the ever-constant.
Knowing the ever-constant speaks of insight.
Benefitting life speaks of good fortune.
Heart/mind making Qi speaks of strength.

When creatures are robust but old,
We call them “not Dao”.
That which is “not Dao” has an early finish.

Fifty six

He who knows does not speak;
He who speaks does not know.

Block your senses, close your gateway.
Blunt your sharpness,
Loosen your tangles,
Soften your brightness,
Be the same as the dust of the world.
This is called a deep and mysterious sameness.

Therefore : you can not gain it and be friendly,
Can not gain it and be unfriendly,
Can not gain it and benefit,
Can not gain it and cause harm,
Can not gain it and have high rank,
Can not gain it and be lowly.

Therefore you become valuable to the world.

Late

Three

Not honoring those who are esteemable
Ensures that the citizens do not strive.
Not valuing rare goods
Ensures that the citizens do not act like thieves.
Not showing that which can be desired
Ensures that the citizens' heart/minds do not become
confused.

Thus the governing of the sage
Empties their heart/minds, fills their stomachs,
Weakens their ambitions, strengthens their bones.

By always ensuring that the citizens are
without-knowledge and without-desire,
Those who make men wise will not dare to act.

Act with non-action, then all will be governed!

Eight

The highest virtue is like water –
Water's virtue benefits the ten thousand creatures, yet it
does not strive.

It dwells in places that everyone detests,
Therefore it is almost comparable to Dao!

In dwelling, the virtue is in the land.
In your heart/mind, the virtue is in being profound and
deep.

In relations, the virtue is in being kind.
In speech, the virtue is in being truthful.
In governing, the virtue is in being honest and just.
In your duties, the virtue is in being competent.
In action, the virtue is in the timing.

Now : only because there is no striving,
Therefore there is no blame.

Twelve

The five colors can make people's eyes blind.
The five tones can make people's ears deaf.
The five flavors can make people's mouths dull.
Excessive hunting and horse racing can make people's
heart/minds become wild.
Rare goods can make people's behavior corrupt.

Thus the sage :
Acts on what is inside, he does not act on what he sees.
Therefore he leaves that and chooses this.

Seventeen

The existence of the best ruler is barely known to the
people.
Next is one who they love and praise.
Next is one who they fear.
Next is one who they ridicule.

If the ruler does not trust enough, then he will not have
anyone's trust.

Thoughtful!, he values his words.

When tasks are accomplished and duties are successful,
The 100 families all say "we are naturally so".

Eighteen

When the great Dao is abandoned,
There exists kindness and morality.

When intelligence and wisdom arise,
There exists a great deal of deception.

When the six relationships are not in harmony,
There exists devoted children and loving parents.

When the nation and the families are very confused,
There exists loyal officials.

Nineteen

Renounce sacredness, abandon wisdom,
And the citizens benefit 100-fold.
Renounce kindness, abandon morality,
And the citizens return to being devoted children and
loving parents.
Renounce cleverness, abandon profit,
And thieves and bandits will not exist.

These three things thus make a civilized society, but are
not enough.

Therefore : to ensure the citizens have a place to belong–
See the simplicity,
Embrace the concept of the uncarved block,
Less selfishness,
Fewer desires.

Late

Twenty two

What is wrong then becomes whole and perfect.
What is bent then becomes straight.
What is hollow then becomes filled.
What is worn out then becomes new.
Have little, then gain.
Have too much, then become confused.

Thus the sage :

Embraces the One, thus serving as an example to the world –

He does not display himself, therefore he has insight.
Does not consider himself correct, therefore he distinguishes himself.

Does not boast about himself, therefore he possesses merit.

Does not brag about himself, therefore he endures.

Now : only because he does not strive,
Therefore no one in the world can strive against him.

That which the ancients say :

“He who is wrong then becomes whole and perfect” –
How can these be empty words?
Be truly whole and perfect, and return to it.

Twenty seven

A good traveler is without wagon track or footprint.
A good speaker is without flaw or disgrace.
A good accountant does not use counting tokens.
A good barrier is without bar or lock, yet can not be opened.
A good binding is without cord or restraint, yet can not be loosened.

Thus the sage :

Is always good at helping people,
Therefore he does not abandon people.
Is always good at helping creatures,
Therefore he does not abandon creatures.
This is called following your insight.

Therefore : he who is a virtuous person is the teacher of he who is not a virtuous person.

He who is not a virtuous person is the resource of he who is a virtuous person.

If the latter does not value his teacher,
Or the former does not love his resource,
Even if there is wisdom, there will be great confusion.
This is called the essential subtle mystery.

Twenty nine

Would you take hold of the world and control it?
I see you have no choice.

Now : the world is a divine vessel,
You can not control it (indeed!).
He who acts, ruins it;
He who grasps, loses it.

Therefore : creatures are
Sometimes active, sometimes passive,
Sometimes breathe heavy, sometimes breathe easy,
Sometimes strong, sometimes weak,
Sometimes oppressed, sometimes overthrown.

Thus the sage :

Removes the extremes,
Removes the extravagant and wasteful,
Removes the arrogance.

Thirty eight

A man of highest De does not use his De, thus he possesses De.
A man of inferior De does not lose his De, thus he is without De.

A man of highest De uses non-action, and acts without motive.
A man of inferior De coerces others, and has a motive to act.
A man of highest kindness coerces others, and acts without motive.
A man of highest morality coerces others, and has a motive to act.
A man of highest propriety coerces others, and if there is no one who responds,
Then he rolls up his sleeves and keeps doing it.

Therefore : lose Dao, and later comes De.
Lose De, and later comes kindness.
Lose kindness, and later comes morality.
Lose morality, and later comes propriety.
Now : propriety is that which is merely the appearance of loyalty and honesty,
And the beginning of confusion.

He who is ahead in knowledge has the flower of Dao,
But the beginning of stupidity and foolishness.

Thus the greatest elders :

Live by Dao's substance, and do not dwell on Dao's appearance.
Live on Dao's fruit, and do not dwell on Dao's flower.
Therefore they leave that and choose this.

Late

Forty five

Great achievement seems incomplete,
But its usefulness is not impaired.

Great fullness is like a cup or bowl,
Its usefulness is not exhausted.

Great straightness seems bent.
Great skillfulness seems clumsy.
Great debaters seem slow of speech.

Restlessness conquers cold.
Stillness conquers heat.

Purity and clarity along with stillness makes the world
proper and correct.

Forty six

When the world possesses Dao,
Riding horses are nonetheless used for manure.
When the world is without Dao,
War-horses are bred in the countryside.

There is no fault greater than the capacity for desire.
There is no misfortune greater than not knowing when
you have enough.
There is no error greater than desire for gain.

Therefore : knowing the sufficiency of having enough,
there is always enough!

Forty seven

You do not have to go out the door
In order to to know the world.
You do not have to look out the window
In order to to know the Way of heaven.

The farther you go out,
You know even less.

Thus the sage :
Does not travel, yet knows.
Does not display himself, yet has a reputation.
Does not act, yet accomplishes.

Forty eight

The actions of those who learn daily increase.
The actions of those who Dao daily decrease.
Decreasing and again decreasing,
In order to arrive at non-action.

Use non-action, and nothing is left undone.
To take hold of the world, always use non-interference.
When you are compelled to interfere,
Then you are not qualified to take hold of the world.

Forty nine

The sage does not have a constant heart/mind,
Thus the 100 families' heart/minds become his
heart/mind.

He who is virtuous, I am virtuous to him.
He who is not virtuous, I am also virtuous to him.
Because De is virtue.

He who is honest, I am honest with him.
He who is not honest, I am also honest with him.
Because De is honesty.

The sage lives in the world, gathering it all in.
And so he serves the world, merging with their
heart/minds.

The 100 families all pay attention to their ears and eyes,
And the sage treats them all like his children.

Fifty three

If I correctly use the tiniest bit of knowledge that I
possess

While travelling on the great Way,
It is only walking off the path that I need to fear.
The great Way is extremely even,
But the citizens are fond of side paths.

Although the royal court is very well-kept,
The fields are very overgrown with weeds,
The granaries are very empty.
While at the court they wear refined multicolored silks,
Carry sharp swords,
Stuff themselves with drink and food,
And have an excess of wealth and goods.

This is called robbery and extravagance,
Not Dao, indeed!!

Late

Fifty four

That which is well established is not uprooted.
That which is well embraced is not abandoned.
Thus children and grandchildren offer sacrifices, and so
sacrifices do not stop.

Cultivate it in the self – your De will then be true and
real.
Cultivate it in the family – its De will then be more than
enough.
Cultivate it in the village – its De will then last forever.
Cultivate it in the nation – its De will then be abundant.
Cultivate it in the world – its De will then be everywhere.

Therefore : use your self to contemplate the self.
Use your family to contemplate the family.
Use your village to contemplate the village.
Use your nation to contemplate the nation.
Use the world to contemplate the world.

How do I thus know the world is like this?
By means of this.

Fifty seven

Use honesty and justness when governing a nation.
Use strange and unusual tactics when commanding
troops.

Use non-interference to take hold of the world.
How do I thus know it is like this?
By means of this :

The world has many prohibitions and taboos,
And the citizens become even poorer.
The citizens have many sharp tools,
And the nation and the families grow in confusion.
The people have too much knowledge and cleverness,
And strange things begin to increase.
Matters of law are increasingly proclaimed,
And more thieves and bandits exist.

Therefore : the sage says –
I use non-action, and the citizens naturally transform.
I cherish stillness, and the citizens naturally become
honest and just.
I use non-interference, and the citizens naturally become
wealthy.
I am without-desire, and the citizens naturally return to
the state of the uncarved block.

Fifty eight

If their government is very restrained,
Its citizens will be very genuine and honest.
If their government is very observant and alert,
Its citizens will be very lacking and deficient.

Misfortune! is that which good fortune leans on.
Good fortune! is that which misfortune lies on.
Who knows their limits?
They are not honest and just.
Honesty and justness returns, becoming strange and
unusual.
Virtue returns, becoming weird and strange.

The confusion of the people –
Its days have indeed been everlasting.

Thus the sage :
Is honest and does not divide,
Is honorable and does not injure,
Is straightforward and does not indulge in excess,
Is bright but does not dazzle.

Fifty nine

When governing people or doing heaven's duties,
It is better to be sparing.

Now : only when you can be sparing,
This is called early acceptance.
Early acceptance is called doubling your accumulation
of De.

With a double accumulation of De,
Then everything can be overcome.
When everything can be overcome,
Then no one knows your limits.
When no one knows your limits,
You can possess the nation.
Possessing the mother of the nation,
You can forever endure.

This is called having a deep source and a firm
foundation,
The Way of long life and enduring sight.

Late

Sixty

Governing a great nation is like cooking a small fish.

Because Dao is present in the world,
Its ghosts do not have spirit.

Not that its ghosts do not have any spirit,
But their spirit does not injure people.

Not only does their spirit not injure people,
The sage also does not injure people.

Now : since these two do not injure each other,
Therefore their De merges and returns!

Sixty one

A great nation is like the lowest places water can flow –
The merging place of the world,
The female of the world.

The female always uses stillness to conquer the male.
By using stillness, she becomes lower-than.

Therefore : if a great nation is lower-than a small nation,
Then it takes hold of the small nation.
If a small nation is lower-than a great nation,
Then it is taken hold of by the great nation.

Therefore : sometimes one nation is lower-than in order
to take hold of,
Sometimes one nation is lower-than and then it is taken
hold of.

A great nation merely desires to combine livestock and
people,
A small nation merely desires to get work for its people.
Now : for both nations to each get that which is their
desire,
It is proper for the great nation to be lower-than.

Sixty two

That which Daos is the obscure mystery of the ten
thousand creatures.
This is the treasure of a virtuous person,
And that which is the protection of a person who is not
virtuous.

Beautiful speech can be used in the market,
Respectful behavior can benefit people.
People who are not virtuous,
Why abandon them?

Therefore : when inaugurating the son of heaven,
Or installing the three nobles –
Even if you possessed jade disks drawn by a team of
four horses,
That is not as good as sitting and offering this Way.

What was the ancients' reason that they valued this Way?
Did they not say :
Seek in order to obtain,
Have faults in order to be forgiven?

Therefore Dao becomes valuable to the world.

Sixty three

Act with non-action.
Handle duties with non-interference.
Taste that which is without-flavor.

Greatness is insignificant, too much is less.
Repay animosity with De.

Plan for the difficult while it is easy.
Act on the great while it is tiny.
In the world, difficult duties certainly start while easy.
In the world, great duties certainly start while tiny.

Thus the sage in the end does not act great,
Therefore he can achieve his greatness.

Men who make promises lightly, certainly few will trust.
Men who expect most duties to be easy will certainly
have many difficulties.

Thus the sage plans for things to be difficult,
Therefore in the end he is without difficulty!

Late

Sixty four

What is peaceful is easy to hold.
What has not yet been revealed is easy to plan for.
What is brittle is easy to shatter.
What is minute is easy to scatter.
Act on it while it does not yet exist.
Govern them while they are not yet confused.

A tree too big to embrace is created from the tiniest
shoot.
A terrace of nine stories rises from a pile of dirt.
A journey of a thousand miles begins from under the feet.

He who acts, ruins it.
He who grasps, loses it.

Thus the sage :
Does not act, therefore he does not ruin.
Does not grasp, therefore he does not lose.

Citizens are always on the verge of achieving their
undertakings, yet they ruin them.
Be as careful in the end as if it was the beginning,
Then you will not ruin your affairs.

Thus the sage :
Desires to not desire,
Does not value rare goods,
Learns to not learn.

He returns to that which everyone else has passed over,
Thus helping the ten thousand creatures to be naturally
so,
Yet not daring to act.

Sixty five

The virtue of the ancients (they who acted in Dao),
Did not use it to enlighten the citizens,
But would have used it to keep them ignorant –
The citizens are hard to govern
Because they have too much knowledge.

Therefore : using knowledge to govern the nation
Is the bane of the nation.
Not using knowledge to govern the nation
Is the good fortune of the nation.
He who has knowledge of these two also has them as
examples.

To always understand these examples –
This is called deep and mysterious De.
Deep and mysterious De is so profound! and remote!
That when creatures return, it returns with them!
Then they reach the greatest harmony.

Sixty six

The reason that rivers and seas can act as kings of the
100 valleys
Is because they are good at being lower-than them.
Therefore : they can act as kings of the 100 valleys.

Thus the sage :
In desiring to be above the citizens,
He must by means of his speech be lower-than them.
In desiring to be before the citizens,
He must by means of his self be behind them.

Thus the sage :
Lives above them, but the citizens are not burdened.
Lives in front of them, but the citizens are not harmed.
Thus the world is pleased to promote him, and does not
tire of him.

Because he does not strive,
Therefore no one in the world can strive against him.

Post-Guodian

Eleven

Thirty spokes of a wheel share one hub;
In its emptiness exists the usefulness of the cart.

Mix water with clay thus making a vessel;
In its emptiness exists the usefulness of the vessel.

Cut out doors and windows thus making a room;
In their emptiness exists the usefulness of the room.

Therefore : what exists thus makes a thing profitable;
Emptiness thus makes it useful.

Twenty six

Serious serves as the source of frivolous.
Stillness serves as the ruler of restlessness.

Thus the noble man travels the entire day,
And does not stray from his wagon.
He is serious, even though glorious sights and feasts
exist;
He lives above them, like this.

So how could one be the master of ten thousand chariots,
And conduct his self frivolously in the world?

Be frivolous, then lose the source.
Be restless, then lose the rulership.

Thirty three

He who knows people is wise;
He who knows himself has insight.

He who is victorious over people possesses power;
He who is victorious over himself is strong.

He who knows he has enough is wealthy;
He who uses force possesses ambition.

He who does not lose his place endures;
He who dies yet does not perish has longevity.

Thirty six

When you are about to gather something,
You must have originally spread it out.
When you are about to weaken something,
You must have originally strengthened it.
When you are about to abandon something,
You must have originally been interested in it.
When you are about to seize something,
You must have originally given it.

This is called subtle and obscure insight.

What is soft and weak conquers what is hard and strong.

Fish can not escape from the deep;
The sharp tools of the nation
Can not be shown to the people.

Forty

The movement of Dao returns things.
The function of Dao is to weaken things.

The ten thousand creatures of the world are created from
being;
Being is created from non-being.

Forty two

Dao creates one.
One creates two.
Two creates three.
Three creates the ten thousand creatures.
The ten thousand creatures carry Yin and embrace Yang,
Pouring their Qi together, thus becoming harmonious.

That which people detest :
Being alone, orphaned, lonely, and unlucky –
Yet kings and nobles thus name themselves.

Therefore : creatures
Sometimes lose, yet they gain;
Sometimes gain, yet they lose.

That which people teach, I also teach :
Those who are bullies and hoodlums do not meet their
natural death.
I will thus become their elder teacher.

Post-Guodian

Forty three

The softest things of the world
Overrun the hardest things of the world.

Non-being can enter where there is no space in between.
Thus I know that non-action has benefits.

The teaching of no-talking,
The benefit of non-action –
Few in the world attain these.

Fifty

Between coming out into life and entering death,
Followers of life are 3 in 10.
Followers of death are 3 in 10.
People whose lives are merely moving them towards the
place of death
Are also 3 in 10.

Now : what is the reason?
Because they live life for its substance.

But I have heard that he who is skilled at taking in life
Can travel the mountains and does not meet rhino or
tiger,
Can enter a battle not wearing armor or weapons.
The rhino has no place to thrust its horns,
The tiger has no place to use its claws,
The weapon has no place to allow its blade.

Now : what is the reason?
Because for him there is no place of death.

Sixty seven

In the world, all say I am great,
But do not seem to be like everyone else.
Now : only because I am not like everyone else,
therefore I can be great.
If I was like everyone else,
Long ago! I would have become insignificant, indeed!

Now : I possess three treasures –
Hold and maintain them.
The first is called compassion,
The second is called economy,
The third is called not daring to act first in the world.

With compassion, you can therefore be brave.
With economy, you can therefore expand.
By not daring to act first in the world,
Therefore you can achieve the capacity for leadership.

At present, people abandon compassion but also try to be
brave,
Abandon economy but also try to expand,
Abandon being behind but also try to be first –
This is death!

Now : when compassion is used in war, the consequence
is victory.
When it is used for protection, the consequence is
strength.
When heaven would help you,
Using compassion it protects you.

Sixty eight

He who is good at being a scholar is not militant.
He who is good at war does not get angry.
He who is good at conquering the enemy does not
engage them.
He who is good at making use of people acts lower-than
them.

This is called the De of not striving.
This is called the power of making use of people.
This is called joining the elite of heaven's ancients,
indeed!

Post-Guodian

Sixty nine

Those who command troops have a saying :
I dare not act like the master, but instead act like a guest.
Dare not advance an inch, but instead retreat a foot.

This is called marching without marching,
Seizing without using your arms,
Routing without having an enemy,
Defending without using weapons.

There is no misfortune greater than underestimating the
enemy.
By underestimating the enemy, I nearly lose my
treasures.

Therefore : when armies on opposing sides are evenly
matched,
Then they who mourn will be victorious!

Seventy

My words are very easy to understand,
Very easy to practice.
But there is no one in the world who can understand
them,
There is no one who can practice them.

My words possess a lineage,
My duties possess a ruler.

Now : only because I am without-knowledge,
Thus I am not understood.
Those who understand me are rare,
Consequently I am one who is valued!

Thus the sage wears coarse cloth, but carries jade in his
heart.

Seventy one

Knowing that you do not know is honorable!
Not knowing that you know is a sickness!

Now : only when you are sick of sickness,
Thus you are not sick.

The sage is not sick
Because he is sick of sickness.
Thus he is not sick.

Seventy two

If the citizens do not fear your authority,
Then a greater authority will arrive!

Do not disrespect their dwellings,
Do not despise their livelihood.

Now : only because you do not despise them,
Thus they will not tire of you.

Thus the sage :
Knows himself but not display himself,
Loves himself but does not exalt himself.
Therefore he leaves that and chooses this.

Seventy three

When your courage lies in daring,
The consequence is killing.
When your courage lies in not daring,
The consequence is survival.

These two choices, they sometimes cause benefit,
sometimes cause harm.
That which heaven detests – who knows its reasons?

The Way of heaven :
Does not strive, yet skillfully achieves its goals.
Does not speak, yet skillfully responds.
Does not summon, yet everything naturally comes to it.
Is certainly unhurried, yet skillfully prepares.

Heaven's net is extremely vast;
It is wide meshed, yet does not fail.

Seventy four

If the citizens do not fear death,
How can you use death to frighten them?
Assuming you could ensure that the citizens always fear
death,
And I get hold of those who act strange and unusual and
kill them,
Then who would be daring?

There will always exist an executioner.
Now : to take the place of the executioner to do the
killing,
This is called taking the place of a great craftsman to
carve wood.
Now : of those who take the place of a great craftsman to
carve wood,
Few will not injure their hand!

Post-Guodian

Seventy five

The citizens are hungry
Because their superiors eat too much of their taxes.
Thus they are hungry.

The citizens are hard to govern
Because their superiors are compelled to take action.
Thus they are hard to govern.

The citizens take death lightly
Because they seek the substance of life.
Thus they take death lightly.

Now : only he who has no use for being alive
Is virtuous compared to he who values living.

Seventy six

The people are born (indeed!) soft and weak.
They die (indeed!) hard and inflexible.
The ten thousand creatures, the grass and trees, are born
(indeed!) soft and fragile.
They die (indeed!) dried and withered.

Therefore : that which is hard and inflexible is a follower
of death.
That which is soft and weak is a follower of life.

Thus if a weapon is inflexible, the consequence is defeat.
If a tree is inflexible, then it snaps.

Inflexible and great dwell below.
Soft and weak dwell above.

Seventy seven

The Way of heaven, how it is just like stretching a bow?
He who is high is pressed down by it.
He who is low is lifted by it.
He who has excess is reduced by it.
He who does not have enough is filled by it.

The Way of heaven

Reduces what has excess and fills what does not have
enough.

The Way of people on the other hand is not like this,
And takes from those who do not have enough in order
to

offer it to those who have too much.

Who can have too much and offer it to the world?
Only he who possesses Dao.

Thus the sage :

Acts, but is not concerned with the results.
Accomplishes his tasks, but does not dwell on them.
He does not desire to display his virtue.

Seventy eight

In the world, nothing is softer and weaker than water.
Yet for attacking that which is hard and strong,
There is nothing that can surpass it.
This is because it endlessly replaces itself.

Weakness conquers strength.

Softness conquers hardness.

In the world, there is no one who does not know this,
But there is no one who can practice it.

Thus the sage says :

Accepting upon oneself the disgrace of the nation
Is called being master of the shrines.
Accepting upon oneself the misfortune of the nation
Is called being king of the world.

Honest words seem contrary.

Post-Guodian

Seventy nine

Harmonize a great resentment,
And there must exist some remaining resentment.
How can this be considered good?

Thus the sage :

Holds the left side of an agreement,
But does not demand payment of people.

Therefore : to have De is to take charge of your
agreements;
To be without De is to take charge of taking away from
others.

The Way of heaven, while without favor,
Is always with virtuous people.

Eighty

In a small nation with few citizens :
Ensure that it has the weapons of ten nobles, but does not
use them.
Ensure that the citizens take death seriously, and do not
migrate far.
Even though they have boats and carriages, there is no
place to take advantage of them.
Even though they have armor and weapons, there is no
place to display them.

Ensure that the citizens return to knotting ropes and
using
them,
Find deliciousness in their food,
Beauty in their clothes,
Contentment in their dwellings,
Happiness in their customs.

Although neighboring nations overlook one another,
And sounds of roosters and dogs can be heard in one
another –
The citizens reach old age and die,
And do not come and go between one another.

Eighty one

True words are not beautiful;
Beautiful words are not true.

He who has virtue does not argue;
He who argues does not have virtue.

He who knows is not learned;
He who is learned does not know.

The sage does not accumulate things –
Since through serving people, the more one has;
Since through giving to people, one has even more.

The Way of heaven benefits and does not cause harm.
The Way of the sage acts yet does not strive.

*As mentioned above, chapter 2 seems to be a truly
“mongrel” chapter, with characteristics that indicate it
belongs to all three layers, and none of them. Therefore,
it is presented here, separate from the other layers.*

Two

In the world, when all know that the action of beauty is
beautiful, then ugliness ensues.
When all know that the action of good is goodness, then
not-good ensues.

Therefore : being and non-being create each other,
Difficult and easy complete each other,
Long and short contrast each other,
High and low lean on each other,
Tone and voice harmonize each other,
Before and after follow each other.

Thus the sage :
Lives by using non-action in his duties,
And practicing no-talking in his teachings.

The ten thousand creatures arise, but do not have a
beginning.
Creating but not possessing;
Acting, but not concerned with the results;
Accomplishing tasks, but not dwelling on them.

Now : only because there is no dwelling,
Thus the results do not depart.

What Would the Sage Do?

Thus the sage :
Lives by using non-action in his duties,
And practicing no-talking in his teachings.

Thus the governing of the sage
Empties their heart/minds, fills their bellies,
Weakens their ambitions, strengthens their bones.

The sage is not kind;
Thus the 100 families become as straw dogs to him.

Thus the sage :
Puts his self behind others, yet finds his self before them.
Considers his self extraneous, yet his self survives.
Is this not because he has no self-interests?
Therefore he can achieve his self-interests.

Thus the sage :
Acts on what is inside, he does not act on what he sees.
Therefore he leaves that and chooses this.

Thus the sage :
Embraces the One, thus serving as an example to the
world –
He does not display himself, therefore he has insight.
Does not consider himself correct, therefore he
distinguishes himself.
Does not boast about himself, therefore he possesses
merit.
Does not brag about himself, therefore he endures.
Now : only because he does not strive,
Therefore no one in the world can strive against him.

Thus the sage :
Is always good at helping people,
Therefore he does not abandon people.
Is always good at helping creatures,
Therefore he does not abandon creatures.
This is called following your insight.

Thus the sage :
Removes the extremes,
Removes the extravagant and wasteful,
Removes the arrogance.

Thus the sage can achieve greatness
Because he does not act great.
Therefore he can achieve greatness.

Thus the sage :
Does not travel, yet knows.
Does not display himself, yet has a reputation.
Does not act, yet accomplishes.

The sage does not have a constant heart/mind,
Thus the 100 families' heart/minds become his
heart/mind.

The sage lives in the world, taking it all in.
And so he serves the world, merging with their
heart/minds.

The 100 families all pay attention to their ears and eyes,
And the sage treats them all like his children.

Therefore : the sage says –
I use non-action, and the citizens naturally transform.
I cherish stillness, and the citizens naturally become
honest and just.
I use non-interference, and the citizens naturally become
wealthy.
I am without-desire, and the citizens naturally return to
the state of the uncarved block.

Thus the sage :
Is honest and does not divide,
Is honorable and does not injure,
Is straightforward and does not indulge in excess,
Is bright but does not dazzle.

The sage also does not injure people.

Thus the sage in the end does not act great,
Therefore he can achieve his greatness.

Thus the sage plans for things to be difficult,
Therefore in the end he is without difficulty!

Thus the sage :
Does not act, therefore he does not ruin.
Does not grasp, therefore he does not lose.

Thus the sage :
Desires to not desire,
Does not value rare goods,
Learns to not learn.

Thus the sage :
In desiring to be above the citizens,
He must by means of his speech be lower-than them.
In desiring to be before the citizens,
He must by means of his self be behind them.

Thus the sage :
Lives above them, but the citizens are not burdened.
Lives in front of them, but the citizens are not harmed.
Thus the world is pleased to promote him, and does not
tire of him.

What Would the Sage Do?

Thus the sage wears coarse cloth, but carries jade in his heart.

The sage is not sick
Because he is sick of sickness.
Thus he is not sick.

Thus the sage :
Knows himself but not display himself,
Loves himself but does not exalt himself.
Therefore he leaves that and chooses this.

Thus the sage :
Acts, but is not concerned with the results.
Accomplishes his tasks, but does not dwell on them.
He does not desire to display his virtue.

Thus the sage says :
Accepting upon oneself the disgrace of the nation
Is called being master of the shrines.
Accepting upon oneself the misfortune of the nation
Is called being king of the world.

Thus the sage :
Holds the left side of an agreement,
But does not demand payment of people.

The sage does not accumulate things –
Since through serving people, the more one has;
Since through giving to people, one has even more.

The Way of the sage acts yet does not strive.

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