The Dàodéjīng: A 2022 Translation

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Abstract

This paper is divided into two sections. Section one is a translation of the Dàodéjīng in English. Section two is an in-depth analysis and explanation of the translation of the Dàodéjīng in section one. This paper includes both Chinese versions of the standard Wáng Bì and a reconstructed Mǎwángduī version of the Dàodéjīng with the addition of appropriate commas and full stops. The two key aspects in regard to this paper’s commentary that may be somewhat different to previous works, is that this paper has defined the Dào as that action (or movement) within emptiness that cannot be seen with the naked eye but has brought all life into existence and also maintains it. Therefore, the translation of Lǎozǐ’s cornerstone philosophy could be a play on words, where wúwéi 無為 not only takes wú 無 to mean “no” or “non” but also takes wéi 為 to mean “emptiness.” The translation of wúwéi would therefore, also be, “emptiness [in] action,” which refers to the actions that are happening within emptiness which cannot be seen by the naked eye. The second aspect is in relation to dé 德. The English and Confucian meaning of virtue is having high moral standards. Lǎozǐ’s dé appears to have had little to do with morals in the modern sense of the word. From the 5 “virtues” mentioned by Lǎozǐ, we can clearly see that Lǎozǐ’s virtue was based on following the principles of Dào. This paper therefore proposes that the dé can be translated as “quiescence.”

Keywords: Daodejing, Daoism, Chinese philosophy, translation

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The goal of this paper is two-fold, the first is to present a translation of the Dàodéjīng as close to the original text as possible. This has been attempted before of which it appears that three translations stand out in particular: Chan (1963), Lin (1994) and Chen (1998). The second purpose of this paper is to publish it as an open source text, so that it is freely available and easily accessible to anyone, regardless of whether they read Chinese or not and can also be used as a generic outline for future research.

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

1.2 Significance

This translation has been created to help shed new light and different angles on what is one of the world’s most famous texts. It seems as though in the 1990s, just about anyone and everyone was translating the Dàodéjīng. Fast forward another twenty-five years or so, and it is quite the opposite, where sinology journals have little interest in a new Dàodéjīng translation. The issue is that finding a correct Dàodéjīng translation is still quite rare, with some of the worst translations coming from the Western academic sinology community. Even to this day there are a number of so-called leading Western scholars lecturing on all aspects of sinology who cannot speak Mandarin fluently and have never lived in China for a prolonged period of time. To make matters worse, a few of these scholars are also editors and reviewers for academic journals related to Chinese studies.

This brings about the question, what is a “correct” translation of the Dàodéjīng? One could start answering this question by asking, what are the requirements needed by a native English-speaking translator to translate the text. The author would suggest the following four skills are probably a useful starting point: (1) Understanding the intricacies of one’s own native language. (2) Having the ability to speak, read and write Mandarin on a level that only comes with spending many years in China or Taiwan. (3) Formal university studies in ancient Chinese language (古代漢語). (4) An exceptional understanding of ancient Chinese culture and thought, through the
practical and academic study of various ancient Chinese arts and philosophies. By having achieved these four skills the translator will most likely have the ability to read the Dàodéjīng in its original language and make sense of it.

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

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

1.3 Methodology

This paper is divided into two sections. Section one is a simple translation of the Dàodéjīng in English. Section two is an in-depth analysis and explanation of the translation of the Dàodéjīng in section one. The methodology described below is for section two.

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

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

For the Mǎwángduī version, this paper uses the acronym, MWD. As both the Mǎwángduī and Wáng Bì versions of the Dàodéjīng within China’s various major publishing houses tend to have inconsistencies, mistakes and are varied in character choice, this paper has endeavoured to recreate a Chinese version of the Mǎwángduī
Dàodéjīng (or more accurately Dèdàojīng), by combining both versions A and B, to help fill any gaps that each may have. Whether it be version A or B, if the character matches the Wáng Bì version’s character, this paper will take that as the one to use. This paper also mentions obvious character variations between the two Mǎwángduí versions. In places where the Guōdiàn (A, B and C) version is obviously different from the other two texts, it is mentioned in the footnotes.


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

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

1.4 A Note on This Papers Commentary and Key Translations

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

The English and Confucian meaning of virtue is having high moral standards. Lǎozǐ recommends following nature’s example and using its principles as the way to live. Just as nature can seem very harsh and certainly lacking in morals in the human sense of the word, Lǎozǐ said, treat the people like (sacrificial) straw dogs. Lǎozǐ’s dé 德 had little to do with morals in the modern sense of the word. From the 5 “virtues (see pg. 160),” mentioned by Lǎozǐ, we can clearly see that Lǎozǐ’s virtue was based on following the principles of Dào. If multiple words can be used, the translation for dé may be: someone who adheres and lives by the principles of the Dào, or the principles of naturalness. Simply put, someone who has the qualities of the Dào has dé. This makes translating dé extremely difficult as one needs to find a word that has the “qualities” of Dào in its meaning or at the very least, the qualities of naturalness. This paper therefore proposes that dé can be translated as “quiescence.” A common translation for the Dàodéjīng is, The Classic of the Way and Virtue. In this case, the
Throughout this paper there is one word that has not been translated; “Dào.” This word has specifically been written with its tone throughout the paper, except for in the English translation section. The reason for this is with its tone attached, it is clearly conveyed as a non-English word. The tonal mark is taken away in the English translation to recognise it, as an English word. This paper recommends that while “the way” is an acceptable translation for the Dào, no English word is equivalent to the word Dào and therefore just as English has always incorporated new foreign words into its vocabulary, so should the Dào become incorporated as “Dao.” The word “Tao” is specifically not used as it promotes an incorrect “T” sound as opposed to the correct “D” sound used in the Northern Chinese Mandarin dialect.

1.5 A Note on the Dàodéjīng and Its Background

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

Another point to make is that the Guōdiàn and Mǎwángduī versions of the Dàodéjīng, clearly have many errors, while the Wáng Bì version has many corrections. Errors based on word sounds over character meaning are one such example. Combine this sound and character issue with the fact that the Dàodéjīng also has much repetitiveness within the chapters and there are hints that it may not have been written by a single person but instead by numerous authors over a long period of time and may also have come from oral transmission. For now, there is no substantial evidence to suggest that Lǎozǐ existed (Mair, 1990, pp.119-130). For the ease of writing within in this paper, “Lǎozǐ” has been used in singular form, instead of plural, which is probably the more appropriate form. The words Lǎozǐ (the original name of the text) and Dàodéjīng are used within this paper as interchangeably titles, as the text has gone by both names. After the discovery of the Mǎwángduī scripts, the text could also now be called the Dēdàojīng due to the flip in the order of chapters.
act. Act through non-action, thus nothing is not managed.

Chapter 4
The Dao is like an empty utensil, yet in use it is not filled. Like an abyss ah, it is like the ancestor of the ten thousand things. It subdues the sharp, unties the entangles, harmonises the bright and is the same as the dust. Deep ah, it is like it perhaps exists. I do not know whose child it is, its form precedes God.

Chapter 5
The sky and the earth are not benevolent, so they treat the ten thousand things to be like straw dogs, the sage is not benevolent, so he treats a hundred surnames to be as straw dogs. Between the sky and the earth, it is like a bellows. Empty, yet it is not exhausted, moving, yet more goes out. Lots of talk is to be quickly poor, it is not like abiding by the centre.

Chapter 6
The valley spirit does not die, it is called the profound female. The gate of the profound female is called the root of the sky and the earth. Continuously it seems to exist, in use though, it is not diligent.

Chapter 7
The sky lives long, the earth is old. The sky and earth are so able to live long and be old because they do not live for themselves, therefore, they are able to live long. So, the sage puts his body behind, yet his body is in front, he puts his body on the outside, yet his body lives. Is this not because he is not for the self? Therefore, he can complete himself.

Chapter 8
Superior goodness is like water, water is good at benefiting the ten thousand things because it does not contend. All its dwellings, people find ugly, therefore, it is almost at the Dao.

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

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

Chapter 9
To hold, yet fill, it is not like before. To temper, yet sharpen, it cannot be preserved a long time. To fill a hall with jade and gold, there is no capability to guard it. To be rich, yet proud, brings self-loss and its own blame. After a deed is satisfied, the body withdrawals, this is the sky’s Dao.

Chapter 10
Can you bring the ethereal and corporeal souls together as one and are you able to do it with no separation? Concentrate your energy to attain softness, can you be like an infant? In cleaning and eliminating the profound inspection, can you have no blemish? In loving the people and managing the state, can you do it with not knowing? In opening and closing the sky’s gate, can you be the female? In understanding the four reaches, can you do it with not knowing? Produced and raised. Produce, yet not to have, to act, yet not depend on, to grow, yet not to slaughter. This is called profound quiescence.

Chapter 11
Thirty spokes together make a single hub, by its emptiness, the vehicle has use. Mould clay so as to make a vessel, by its emptiness, the vessel has use. Chisel a door and window, so as to make a room, by its emptiness the room has use. Therefore, in having, so lies the benefit, in emptiness, so lies the use.

Chapter 12
The five colours cause a person’s eyes to go blind. The five sounds cause a person’s ears to go deaf. The five tastes cause a person’s mouth to go bland. Galloping horses and hunting cause a person’s heart to go mad. Hard to get goods cause a person to do harm. So, the sage does with his abdomen and does not do with his eyes, therefore, he leaves that and gets this.

Chapter 13
Take favours and humiliations like surprises, value great troubles like the body. What is called take favours and humiliations like surprises? Humiliations are below, to get them is like a surprise, to lose them is also like a surprise, this is what is called taking favours and humiliations like surprises. What is called value great troubles
like the body. Because I so have great troubles, so I have a body, if I did not have a body, what troubles would I have?

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

Chapter 14

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

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

Chapter 15

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

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

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

Chapter 16

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

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

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

Chapter 17

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

Chapter 18

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

Chapter 19

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

Chapter 20

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

A desolate wasteland ah, it does not end! All the people are prosperous, like enjoying themselves after the great ox sacrifice, like ascending the platform in spring. I alone am anchored ah, with no omens, like an infant with no laughter. Exhausted ah, like having no place to return too. All the people each have excess, yet I alone am like I
am left behind. I have the heart of a stupid person!

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

Chapter 21

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

Chapter 22

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

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

Chapter 23

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

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

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

Chapter 24

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

Chapter 25

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

Therefore, there is the great Dao, great sky, great earth and the king who is also great. Within the realm there are four greats and the king’s residence is one of them. Man patterns him-self on the earth, the sky patterns it-self on the Dao and the Dao patterns it-self on nature.

Chapter 26

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

Chapter 27

Good travelling leaves no wheel track marks, good speech leaves no deliberate faults, good counting uses no counters or slips, good shutting is without a barrier or bolt, yet cannot be opened, a good knot uses no rope restraints, yet cannot be untied. So, the sage is constantly good at saving the people, therefore, no person is abandoned.
Constant goodness rescues things, therefore, nothing is abandoned, this is called inheriting the brightness. Therefore, good people are the not good people's teacher, the not good people are the good people's capital. Do not value the teacher and do not love the capital, although this wisdom is greatly confusing, it is called the essential mystery.

Chapter 28
Know the male but abide by the female, this is to be the ravine of all that is underneath the sky. To be the ravine of all that is underneath the sky is to not part from the constant quiescence and again return to the infant.

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

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

Chapter 29
One who desires to take all that is underneath the sky and act up on it, I see they will never obtain it. Everything that is underneath the sky is like a spirit implement and cannot be acted upon. To act is to fail, to hold is to lose. Therefore, things either move or follow, either breath out through the nose or puff, are either just strong or they are actually winning, things are either flexed or they are destroyed. So, the sage gets rid of extremes, gets rid of extravagances and gets rid of grandeur.

Chapter 30
When the Dao assists the ruler of men, soldiers will not use force on all that is underneath the sky. These affairs are easy at coming back. The dwelling where the troops are, thistles and thorns will grow. After a great military campaign there must be a year of ill omens.

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

Chapter 31
Now, quality weapons are inauspicious implements, things may fear them, therefore, those that have the Dao do not dwell with them. A man of noble character, his residence will value the left, one who uses soldiers will value the right.

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

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

Chapter 32
The constant Dao has the nameless simplicity. Although small, nothing underneath the sky can subjugate it. If the feudal lords and kings are able to abide by it, then ten thousand things themselves will be a guest. The sky and the earth mutually connect to descend sweet dew, when the people are not ordered about, they themselves become equal.

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

Chapter 33
Knowing a person is wisdom, knowing the self is brightness. Defeating other people is to have strength, defeating the self is to be strong. To know contentedness is to be rich. To do with strength is to have aspirations.
Do not lose yourself, so as to last a long time. To die, yet with no death is to have longevity.

Chapter 34
The great Dao is extensive ah, it can spread to the left and to the right. The ten thousand things depend on it, yet it produces with no decline, it accomplishes but has no name, it clothes and nourishes the ten thousand things but does not govern them.

Constantly without desire it can be named small, the ten thousand things return to it, yet it does not govern them, it can be named the great. Because in the end it does not see it self as great, therefore, it can become great.

Chapter 35
Hold on to the great image and everything underneath the sky will go towards it. Going towards it, yet there is no harm, only great safety and peacefulness. Music and cakes, passing guests will stop. When the Dao exits, it is completely bland and it is tasteless, look at it and there is not enough to see it, listen to it and there is not enough to hear it, use it and there is not enough to finish it.

Chapter 36
What you desire to be inhaled must be resolutely opened, to weaken desires they must be resolutely strengthened, to abandon desires they must resolutely rise up, to seize desires they must be resolutely given. This is called the faint brightness. Soft and weak win over the hard and strong. Fish cannot leave the deep pool, a state’s sharp implements cannot be shown to the people.

Chapter 37
The constant Dao is non-action, so nothing is not done. If feudal lords and kings are able to abide by it, then ten thousand things will themselves transform. If in transforming there is a desire to do, I will subdue it with the nameless simplicity. With the nameless simplicity, now there also will be no desire. With no desire there is stillness and everything underneath the sky will stabilise by themselves.

Chapter 38
Upper quiescence is not quiescence, so there is quiescence. Lower quiescence is to not lose quiescence, so there is no quiescence. Upper quiescence has no action, so nothing has action, lower quiescence acts, so it has action. Upper benevolence acts, so nothing has action, upper righteousness acts, so it has action. Upper rites have actions, so when there is no response, then it will roll up its sleeves and throw its arms in the air.

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

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

Chapter 39
In the past those that had the one were as follows: the sky had the one, so it was clear, the earth had the one, so it was peaceful, the spirit had the one, so it was innately intelligent, the valley had the one, so it was full, the ten thousand things had the one, so they could produce life, the feudal lords and kings had the one, so the ten thousand things underneath the sky were loyal.

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

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

Chapter 40
Returning is the movement of the Dao, weakness is what the Dao uses. The ten thousand things that are underneath the sky are born from having but having is born from emptiness.
Chapter 41
A high-level scholar hears about the Dao and diligently walks it, a middle level scholar hears about the Dao and kind of cherishes but also kind of ignores it, a low-level scholar hears about the Dao and laughs. If he did not laugh, it does not deserve to be the Dao.

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

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

Chapter 42
The Dao produces one, one produces two, two produces three and three produces the ten thousand things. The ten thousand things carry yin on their back and hold yang in their arms, the mixing of energy is what makes the harmony.

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

Chapter 43
When everything that is underneath the sky arrives at being soft, horses will gallop over the hardest underneath the sky, the intangible can enter into that which has no gap. So, I therefore know that non-action has benefit. Teaching without words, the benefit of non-action, hardly anything that is underneath the sky can catch it.

Chapter 44
Your name or body, which is dearer? Your body or your possessions, which is more important? To have or to lose, which is the disease? So therefore, deep love must come at a great cost and lots of hoarding must have ample losses. Know what is sufficient in order to have no disgrace, know when to stop in order to have no danger, only then one can long endure.

Chapter 45
Great accomplishment appears lacking, in its use it does no harm, great fullness appears empty, in its use it has no limit. Great straightness appears bent, great skill appears clumsy, great debating appears inarticulate. Irritability defeats the cold, stillness defeats heat, to be clear and still is the correct way for all that is underneath the sky.

Chapter 46
When everything that is underneath the sky has Dao, galloping horses go back to being used for their dung, when everything that is underneath the sky does not have the Dao, war horses give birth in the outskirts of the city.

There is no greater crime then desire, there is no greater disaster then not knowing what is enough and there is no greater mistake then having desire. Therefore, know when enough is enough, this is to constantly have enough.

Chapter 47
Without going out the door, know everything that is underneath the sky, without peeping out the window you can see the sky’s Dao. The further one goes, the less one knows. So, the sage does not do, yet he knows, does not see, yet he can name things, he does not do, yet he accomplishes.

Chapter 48
For study daily increase, for Dao daily decrease, decrease and decrease until arriving at non-action, non-action, so nothing is not done. In managing everything that is underneath the sky, make it the constant to not have any affairs, to have affairs is to be lacking in managing everything underneath the sky.

Chapter 49
The sage does not have a constant heart, he takes the heart of the hundred surnames to be his own heart. Good people, I am good to, not good people, I am also good to, this is the quiescence of goodness.

Trustful people, I trust, untrustworthy people, I also trust, this is the quiescence of trustfulness. The sage is underneath the sky, he breathes in, so as to mix his heart with everything that is underneath the sky. The hundred
surnames all pay attention to their ears and eyes, and because of this, they are all like the sage’s children.

**Chapter 50**

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

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

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

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

**Chapter 51**

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

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

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

**Chapter 52**

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

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

**Chapter 53**

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

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

**Chapter 54**

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

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

**Chapter 55**

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

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

Chapter 56

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

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

Chapter 57

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

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

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

Chapter 58

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

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

Chapter 59

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

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

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

Chapter 60

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

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

Chapter 61

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

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

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

Chapter 62

The Dao is the abstruse mystery of ten thousand things, it is the good person’s treasure and is what preserves the not good person. Beautiful words can be traded, respectful conduct can increase a person.
People that are not good, why have them abandoned? Therefore, when establishing the son of the sky and putting in place the three minsters, although a large flat round ornament of jade with a hole at the centre is given before the four chariot horses, it is not like sitting down and moving towards the Dao.

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

Chapter 63
Actions have no actions, affairs have no affairs, tastes have no tastes. Big as small, a lot as a little. Repay resentment with quiescence. Plan the difficult while it is easy, do big things while they are small. Underneath the sky difficult affairs must be done when they are easy, underneath the sky great affairs must be done when they are small. So, in the end the sage never does anything great, therefore, the sage is able to accomplish greatness.

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

Chapter 64
What is quiet is easy to maintain, what has not yet come out is easy to plan, what is fragile easily falls apart, what is faint is easily scattered. Act when there is nothing to have, manage when things are not yet a mess.

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

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

Chapter 65
The ancients who were good at practising the Dao did not want to brighten the people but would instead keep them foolish. The people are difficult to manage when they have lots of wisdom.

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

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

Chapter 66
Rivers and oceans are able to be the kings of a hundred valleys because they are good at being below them. Therefore, they are able to be the kings of a hundred valleys.

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

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

Chapter 67
Everything that is underneath the sky calls my Dao great but it seems like it is not.

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

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

Now, to abandon parental affection but to be daring, to abandon frugality but to be expansive, to abandon being behind, so as to be in front is death.
Now, because of parental affection, so in war there is victory, so in military defense there is resoluteness. When the sky wants to save, it guards with parental affection.

Chapter 68
A good soldier does not show his martial skill, good fighting is done with no anger, being good at defeating an enemy is with no participation and being good at using people is to be below them. This is called the quiescence of non-contention, it is also called using the strength of people and it is also called the utmost of joining the sky of old.

Chapter 69
In using soldiers there are the following sayings: “I dare not be the host, only the guest; I dare not advance an inch, only retreat a foot.” This is called moving without moving, to roll up one’s sleeves without showing one’s arms, to attack without an enemy and to hold without a weapon.

There is no greater calamity than to make light of your enemy, making light of your enemy and from many losses my treasure is lost. There is no greater calamity then having no enemy, to have no enemy and I approach losing my preservation. Therefore, fighting armies that are mutually together in combat, it is the grieving one which will defeat the other!

Chapter 70
My words are very easy to know and very easy to walk. But no one underneath the sky is able to know them and no one can walk them. Words have their ancestor, affairs have their monarch.

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

Chapter 71
Knowing that you do not know is superior, not knowing you do not know is a sickness.

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

Chapter 72
When the people do not fear power, then great power arrives. Do not be familiar with people in their dwellings and do not grow sick of them in their living.

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

Chapter 73
Courageous at daring, thus death, courageous at not daring, thus life. These two, either have benefit or harm. What the sky finds evil, who knows why? So, the sage also has difficulties in understanding why.

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

Chapter 74
The people do not fear death, so how are you going to fear them with death. If you make the people constantly fear death, yet one does strange things, I will grab them and kill them, then who will dare to be strange. To constantly have an executioner is to have killing.

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

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

Chapter 75
The people are hungry because their superiors take too many taxes, so they are hungry. People are hard to manage because their superiors have action, so they are difficult to manage.

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

Now, only one who has nothing to do in life is worthy at valuing life.
Chapter 76
At birth humans are soft and weak, at death they are hard and strong. At birth the ten thousand things, the plants and trees are soft and full, at death they are dry and withered. Therefore, the hard and strong follow death, the soft and weak follow life.

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

Chapter 77
The sky’s Dao, is it not like drawing a bow? Up is pressed down, down is lifted up, to have a surplus is to be reduced, to have deficiency is to be supplemented. The sky’s Dao is to reduce what has surplus and to supplement that which is deficient. The Dao of man is not so, it reduces what is deficient and offers to that which has surplus.

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

Chapter 78
In all that is underneath the sky nothing is softer and weaker than water, yet in attacking the hard and strong, nothing can defeat it, this is because its emptiness is changeable. The weak deafeats the strong, the soft defeats the hard, in everything that is underneath the sky, no one does not know this but no one is able to do it.

So, the sage says: “to receive the flith of the state is called the governing alter for the gods of earth and grain. To recieve the bad luck of the state is the king of eveything that is underneath the sky.” Upright words seem to be in reverse.

Chapter 79
In harmonising great resentment their must have some suprlus resentment left over, how can this be good? So, the sage holds the left contract, yet does not demand from people.

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

Chapter 80
A small state with few people makes ten multiples of a hundred implements, yet does not use them. Make the people feel heavy about death and do not let them move far away. Although they have boats and carts, there is no place to ride them. Although they have armour and weapons there is no place to display them.

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

Chapter 81
Truthworthy words are not beautiful, beautiful words are not trustworthy. Good does not distinguish, distinguishing is not good. Knowing is not extensive, extensivness is not knowing.

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

3. Chinese Texts, Translation Notes and Analysis

Chapter 1 第一章

Line 1
道可2道，非常3道，名可名，非常名。

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

3 The chá ng 常 character is used throughout the Dàodejīng many times. In the Mǎwángduī version chá ng is substituted for
[The] Dào [that] can [be the] Dào is not [the] constant Dào. [The] name [that] can [be the] name is not [the] constant name.

MWD
道可道也，非恒道也。名可名也，非恒名也。

Line 2
無名天地之始，有名萬物之母。
Nameless, the start [of the] sky [and the] earth. [To] have [a] name, the mother [of] ten thousand things.

MWD
无名万物之始也，有名万物之母也。
Nameless, the start [of] ten thousand things. [To] have [a] name, the mother [of] ten thousand things.

Line 3
故，常無欲，以觀其妙，常有欲，以觀其徼。
Therefore, constantly [with] no desire, so [as to] observe its mysteries. Constantly [to] have desire, so [as to] observe its border (manifestations).

MWD
故，恆无欲也，以觀其眇，恆有欲也，以觀其所噭。

Line 4
此兩者，同出，而異名，同謂之玄。玄之又玄，眾妙之門。
These two, [are] the same origin, but different names. [Are] called the profound. The profound, again the profound, is the door of myriad wonders.

heông 惰, except for in chapter 16, line 2 and 3; chapter 52, line 5 and chapter 55, line 5. The only common denominator between these two characters is that they both can mean “constant.” This idea of constant seems to be mutually exchangeable with the words “normal” or “constantly.” It seems that Lǎozǐ sees nature’s way as being the norm, therefore, cháng could be translated as “natural,” “naturally,” “nature’s way” or “naturalness.” I originally translated it in this way but took these translations out as a direct translation would still require, “constant,” or “constantly.” In chapter 16, line 2, Lǎozǐ explicitly explains what cháng means: [a] return [to] life [is] called [the] constant, [to] know [the] constant [is] called, brightness.

1. In modern Chinese fēicháng 非常 means “extremely.”
2. Characters such as yě 也, hū 乎, yǐ 矣, zhě 者, fū 夫, zāi 員 can all have varying meanings depending on how they are used. They were most likely originally used as a type of pause to help the reader have some form of sentence structure, so they know where they are in the sentence. Therefore, I always add some form of pause by using a comma or full stop in the Chinese text behind these characters.
3. In the MWD versions A and B, tiāndì 天地 (sky and earth) is wànwù 萬物 (ten thousands things).
4. Ten thousand things mean “everything.”
5. The character yǐ 以 is one of the most common grammar characters used in the Dàodéjīng and can have a vast array of meanings depending on the sentence. My view in regard to translating yǐ is that I use, “so,” “can,” “is” or “because” wherever possible. Otherwise, I insert the most reasonable English grammar word. In the MWD version A, miào 妙 (mystery) is miǎo 瞒 (miniscule).
6. The character xuán 玄 is used throughout the Dàodéjīng and could be translated in many ways. It is commonly translated as “dark.” It seems that Lǎozǐ most likely did not mean dark as we use it in English. If we understand it from Lǎozǐ’s perspective it appears to mean something indescribable, like the Dào. As Lǎozǐ commonly uses this character in a positive manner, I use the word “profound,” as in English, something profound tends to be indescribable but is also used in a positive way. MWD omits, zhīxuán 之玄.
7. The grammar word 你 you 又 has been translated as “even more,” as the character means a repetition or continuation in action.
These two [come] out [the] same, yet [are] named differently, both [are] called the profound. Profound [and] even more profound, the gate [to] all mysteries.

**MWD**

兩者, 同出#異名, 同胃#玄, 玄之又玄, 臣妙之門。

**Chapter 2 第二章**

**Line 1**

天下皆知美之為美，斯為乖已，皆知善之為善，斯不善已。

When everything that is] underneath [the] sky, all know beauty to be beautiful, thus [there is] already ugliness. [When] all know good to be beautiful, thus [there is] already not good.

**MWD**

天下皆知美之為美，己為乖，皆知善之為善，斯不善矣。

[When everything that is] underneath [the] sky, all know beauty to be beautiful, [there is] already ugliness. [When] all know good, thus [there is] not good.

**Line 2**

故，有無相生，難易相成，長短相形，高下相傾，音聲相和，前後相隋。


**MWD**

有無之相生也，難易之相成，長短之相形也，高下盈也，音聲之相和也，先後之相隨恆也。

**Line 3**

是以，聖人處無為之事，行不言之教。


**MWD**

是以，聲人居無為之事，行不言之教。

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15 In the MWD version A, 有 is you (have).
16 The characters 天下 (underneath the sky) could also be translated as “the world,” it has purposely been kept as a direct translation.
17 The character 知 is translated as “thus.”
18 The character 以 is translated as “already.”
19 In the Guōdiàn in this chapter zhī (knowledge) is zhì (wisdom).
20 In the MWD version B and the Guōdiàn, 乖 (ugly) is yà (inferior).
21 In the Guōdiàn this line reads: 皆知善此不善也。
22 In the MWD versions A and B, xíng 形 (shape) is xíng 刑 (punishment) and in the Guōdiàn it is xíng 型 (type).
23 In the MWD versions A and B, qīng 倾 (lean) is yíng 盈 (fill).
24 In the MWD versions A and B, suí 隨 (follow) is sui 陥 (this character is what the Sui dynasty was named after) and in the Guōdiàn it is huī or duò (sink or destroy).
25 At the end of this sentence in MWD versions A and B, 恆也 is added, which could translate as [this is the] constant.
26 In line 2, we see an early usage of the philosophy of yin and yang with this idea of duality.
27 In the Guōdiàn, this line reads: 又亡之相生也。
28 The Guōdiàn mistaken uses shēng 聲 (sound). The characters shìyǐ is always translated as “so” in this paper.
29 In the MWD versions A and B, chǔ 處 (reside or dwell) is jū 居 (residence).
30 In the MWD wù 無 is wú 无 and in the Guōdiàn is sometimes wáng 亡. These three characters (無, 无, 亡) have historically been used to represent the word “no or not any.”
31 MWD version A, uses the character shēng 聲, which means “sound.” MWD version B does not have a character for this.
**Line 4**

萬物作焉而弗始，生，而不有，為，而不恃，功成，而弗居。

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

**MWD**

萬物作焉，而弗始，為，而弗恃，成功，而弗居。

**Line 5**

夫唯弗居，是以不去。

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

**MWD**

夫唯弗居，是以不去。

**Chapter 3 第三章**

**Line 1**

不尚賢，使民不爭。

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

**MWD**

不尚賢，使民不爭。

**Line 2**

不貴難得之貨，使民不為盜。

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

**MWD**

不貴難得之貨，使民不為盜。

Examples like this clearly show that a scribe is writing down an orally memorised or orally spoken version and is simply writing a sound as opposed to a character, hence the mistake.  

33 In the Guōdiàn, this line reads: 是以聖人絕為之事。

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

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

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

37 In the MWD cí 謝 (decline) is shì 始 (start).

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

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

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

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

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

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

44 The character dé 得 can mean “to obtain,” “to gain” or “to acquire.”
Line 3
不見可欲，使民心不亂。

M WD
不見可欲，使民不亂。

Line 4
是以，聖人之治，虛其心，實其腹，弱其志，強其骨。
So, [the] sage manages [by] emptying the heart, filling the abdomen, weakening the will [and] strengthening the bones.

M WD
是以，聲人之治也，亓心，實亓腹，弱亓志，強亓骨。

Line 5
常使民無知無欲，使夫，智者，不敢為也。
Constantly make [the] people not know [and have] no desire, make [those] now [who have] wisdom, dare not act.

M WD
恆使民无知无欲也，使夫，知不敢。

Line 6
為無為則無不治。
Act [through] non-action, thus nothing [is] not managed.

M WD
弗為，而已，則無不治。
No action, that is all, thus nothing [is] not managed.

Chapter 4 第四章

Line 1
道沖，而用之，或不盈。
[The] Dà o is [like an] empty utensil, yet [in] use [it is] not filled.

M WD
道沖，而用之，有弗盈也。
[The] Dà o is [like an] empty utensil, [it] has not [been] filled.

45 In the MWD version A, shèng 聖 (sage) is shēng 聲 (sound).
46 In the MWD version A, these three words are not there. In the MWD version B, qí 其 (his, her, its, their) is qí 亓 (this is an archaic word and means “his,” “her,” “its,” or “their”). In the MWD versions this character difference is very common. I will continue to underline it but will not mention it any more in the comments after this chapter. It is unclear if qi is referring to the sage or referring to others, therefore, I have chosen, “the” as the translation, as it is more generic.
47 In ancient Chinese, when there is one character followed by a zhě 者, which is then followed by a few words and then a yě 也, it is the first word before the zhě, which is being defined. In line 5, fú 夫 is translated as “now.” The sentence infers that it is nearly a rule in the way that those who have wisdom will dare not act.
48 The character zé 則 in Chinese is very important and can be difficult to translate into English. It is used throughout the Dàodéjīng as a conjunction to indicate cause and effect. It could therefore be translated as “thus” but this word seems too weak, as the cause and effect that zé refers to is something that is more concrete like a law. As I have been unable to find one word in English that seems to fit, I use “thus,” “because,” or “so as to become.”
49 Chōng 冲 means to “infuse.” This word has connotations with zhōng 盅, which is a “small handleless cup.” The assumption in the context of sentence is that this character chōng is referring to emptiness.
50 In this case huò  or has no specific meaning and is used as a conjunction.
Line 2
淵兮51，似萬物之宗。
[Like an] abyss ah, [it is] like the ancestor [of the] ten thousand things.

MWD
淵51呵，始萬物之宗。

Line 3
挫其銼，解其紛，和其光，同其塵。
[It] subdues the sharp, unties the entangles, harmonises the bright [and is the] same [as] the dust.

MWD
銼其兌，解其紛56，和其光，同其塵。

Line 4
湛兮，似或存。
Deep ah, [it is] like [it] perhaps exists.

MWD
湛兮，佁或存。

Line 5
吾不知誰之子，象帝之先。
I [do] not know whose child [it is], [its] form precedes God.

MWD
吾不知亓誰之子也，象帝之先。

Chapter 5 第五章

Line 1
天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗，聖人不仁，以百姓為芻狗。
[The] sky [and the] earth [are] not benevolent, so [they treat the] ten thousand things to be (like) straw dogs, [the] sage [is] not benevolent, so [he treats a] hundred surnames58 to be [as] straw dogs.59

MWD
天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗，聖60人不仁，以百姓61為芻狗。

51 In the MWD, xī兮 is always hē呵.
52 In MWD version A, sì似 (like or similar) is shǐ始 (start) and in version B, it is 佁, and is most likely pronounced yǐ and means “foolish” or “static.” Maybe something is static just before it starts. This same change is made in line 4.
53 In the MWD version A, yuān淵 (deep pool, profound, deep) is xiāo瀟 (deep and clear water).
54 In the MWD versions A and B, cuò挫 (subdue) is cuò銼 (a file).
55 In the MWD version B, ruì鋭 (sharp) is duì兌 (exchange).
56 In the MWD version B, fēn紛 (entangled) is fēn芬 (fragrance).
57 In modern Chinese the character huò或 is a conjunction and means “or” but in this case it can mean “perhaps”.
58 In Chinese bàixing百姓 directly means a hundred surnames, family or clan names but indirectly means “the common people.”
59 In this chapter, the idea of “straw dogs” appears to be introducing a core concept within the Dàodejīng as that of living naturally in the way nature intended by not interfering and accepting that by not interfering with nature, nature can seem to be very harsh. The sage understands the harshness of this principle but still adheres to it.
60 See n.45.
61 In the MWD version A, xìng姓 (family name) is xǐng省 (pay a visit to one’s parent or inspect or examine).
Line 2
天地之間, 其猶橐籥乎, 虛, 而不屈, 動, 而愈出。

MWD
天地之間, 亓 猶 65 椁籥乎, 虛, 而不屈, 動, 而愈出。

Line 3
多言數窮, 不如守中。
Lots [of] talk 67 [is to be] quickly poor, [it is] not like abiding [by the] centre.

MWD
多聞數窮, 不若守於中。

Chapter 6 第六章

Line 1
谷 68 神不死, 是謂玄牝 70。
[The] valley spirit [does] not die, [it] is called [the] profound female.

MWD
浴神不死, 是胃玄牝。

Line 2
玄牝之門, 是謂天地根。71

MWD
牝之門, 是胃天地之根。

Line 3
綿 72 若存, 用之不勤 73。
Continuously [it] seems [to] exist, [in] use [though, it is] not diligent (consumed).

62 In the MWD versions A and B, qū (to exhaust) is gǔ 殆 (to exhaust).
63 The Guōdiàn uses the exact same characters as these four.
64 In the MWD versions A and B, yù 愈 (more) is yú 犣 (consent or approve).
65 In the MWD version B, yóu 猶 (just as or like) is yǒu 猣 (plan or scheme).
66 In the MWD versions A and B, yán 言 (talk) is wén 聽 (hear).
67 Yán 言 can mean talk or speech.
68 In this case gǔ 谷 is not the simplified version of gǔ 穀. The character gǔ is an ancient character from shàng oracle bone script itself. In the MWD versions A and B, gǔ 穀 (valley) is yù 浴 (bath, wash or bathe. It is most likely an alternate form of gǔ).
69 Both MWD versions A and B use wèi 胃 (stomach and is an alternative form of wèi 腹).
70 The character pìn 牝 is a type of generic female adjective added to words like chicken and horse, in the way that when added, these words become, hen and mare.
71 As the Dào produced everything, Lǎozǐ uses feminine similes such as, the valley spirit, the profound female and the mother to represent it; water runs to the bottom of the valley and new life comes forth. For example, chapter 20, line 8: I alone [am] different [from other] people, because [I] treasure feeding [on the] mother. Chapter 10, line 5: [in] opening [and] closing [the] sky’s gate, can [you] be [the] female? Chapter 28, line 1: know the male [but] abide [by] the female. Chapter 61, line 2: [a] females constantly can [with] stillness defeat [the] male.
72 In the MWD versions A and B, mián 綿 (continuous) is xiàn 縣 (district or prefecture).
73 In the MWD versions A and B, qín 勤 (hardworking) is jǐn 虫 (barely or merely. It can also mean clay).
Chapter 7 第七章

Line 1
天長地久。天地所以能長且久者，以其不自生，故，能長生。


Chapter 8 第八章

Line 1
上善若水，水善利萬物，而不爭。

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

MWD
上善如水，水善利萬物。而有爭。

Line 2
處眾人之所惡，故，幾於道。

All [its] dwellings, people [find] ugly, therefore, [it is] almost at [the] Dào.
MWD
居眾人之所惡\(^{83}\), 故・幾於道矣。

Line 3
居善地・心善淵・與善仁\(^{84}\)・言善信・正善治・事善能・動善時。
[A] good dwelling [is with the] earth, [a] good heart [is an] abyss, good partaking [is] benevolent, good talk [is]
trustworthy, good uprightness [is done with good] management, good affairs [are handled with good] abilities,
good activities [are done with good] timing.

MWD
居善地・心善淵, 予善天, 言\(^{85}\)善信, 正善治, 事善能, 動善時。

Line 4
天唯・不爭・故・無尤。
Now, only [because one does] not contend, therefore, [one does] not [commit any] fault.\(^{86}\) \(^{87}\)

MWD
天唯・不爭, 故・無尤。

Chapter 9 第九章

Line 1
持\(^{88}\)・而盈之, 不如其已。
[To] hold, yet fill, it [is] not like before.

MWD
椙・而盈之, 不若亓\(^{89}\)已。

Line 2
挿\(^{90}\)・而銳\(^{91}\)之\(^{92}\)・不可長保\(^{93}\)。

MWD
挿・而允之, 不可長饑也。

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

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

\(^{85}\) In the MWD version A, yá 言 (speech) is yǔ 予 (give).

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

\(^{87}\) Using this idea of bùzhēng 不爭 or non-contention is a quiescence. See chapter 68, line 1 and 2.

\(^{88}\) In the MWD versions A and B, chí 持 (hold or grasp) is diān 檜 (the tip of a tree).

\(^{89}\) In the MWD version B, ruòqí 若其 (like it) is ruò 如亓 (like it).

\(^{90}\) The character 揿 can have different meanings depending on the tone and is normally pronounced “chuai.” But in
the context of this sentence it is pronounced “zhui” and means “to strike.” In the MWD version B, this character is duán 鍛
(forge or temper, as in forge metal). In the Guódiàn it is, tuān 湍 (rapids or rushing water).

\(^{91}\) In the MWD version B, ruì 銳 (sharp) is yǔn 允 (suitable, allow, fair) and in the Guódiàn it is qún 群 (crowd, group or
measure word).

\(^{92}\) In the Guódiàn these four characters are: 湍・而群之.

\(^{93}\) In MWD versions A and B, bǎo 保 (protect or defend) is bāo 薄 (preserve or nurture) and in the Guódiàn it is the same
and Wáng Bì.
Line 3
金玉滿堂，莫之能守。94

MWD
金玉盈室95，莫之能守也。

Line 4
富貴而驕，自遺其咎。96

MWD
富貴，而驕，自遺咎也。

Line 5
功遂身退，天之道98。
[After a] deed [is] satisfied (finished), [the] body withdrawals, [this is] the sky’s Dà o.

MWD
功遂身退100，天之道也。

Chapter 10 第十章

Line 1
載營魄抱一，能無離乎。99
[Can you] bring [the] ethereal [and] corporeal souls together as one [and are you] able [to do it with] no separation?

MWD
戴營魄抱一，能毌離乎。

Line 2
專氣致柔，能嬰兒乎。99
Concentrate [your] energy (breath) [to] attain softness, can [you be like an] infant?104

MWD
專氣致柔，能嬰兒乎。

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94 Depending on the context this character shǒu 守 is either translated as “abide” or “guard.”
95 In the MWD versions A and B, mǎntāng 滿堂 (full hall) is yíngshì 盈室 (full room).
96 In the Guōdiàn, fù 富 (rich or wealthy) is fù 福 (good fortune or good luck)
97 In the Guōdiàn, jiāo 驕 (proud or arrogant) is qiáo 高 (tall, lofty, proud).
98 The character tiān 天 is normally translated as heaven but a more appropriate translation is probably “sky.”
99 The characters: tiānzhīdào 天之道 (the sky’s Dào) appears in chapter 73, line 4; chapter 77 line 1 and chapter 81, line 5. When zhī 之 is behind a word, the zhī 之 can be translated as “the” and then put in the front of the English sentence. In this way the translation is more direct. An indirect translation of this line may be “this is the way of the Dao.”
100 In the MWD version A, tuì 退 (move back or retreat) is ruì 萼 (edge of the water).
101 In the MWD version B, zàì 戴 (to carry or hold) is dài 戴 (put on or wear).
102 In the MWD version B, wú 是 毋; both are pronounced “wú” and mean “no” or “not.” This is the same in lines 4 and 6.
103 In Chinese medicine there are five spirits stored in the five yin organs which can have an effect on emotions and psychology. The pó 魄 (corporeal soul) is stored in the lungs (and dies at death). Its counterpart is the hún 魂 (ethereal soul), which does not die at death and is stored in the liver. It is commonly thought that the word yíng 营 is another version of the word hún, even though there appears to be no substantial evidence for this.
104 This may be the earliest mention of some form of breath training in China, where Lǎozǐ indirectly recommends to breath like an infant, which probably means to breath naturally.
Line 3

Sì 除玄覽106，能無疵乎。

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

MWD

脩除玄監，能無疵乎。

Line 4

愛民治107國，能無知乎。

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

MWD

愛民栝國，能毋以知乎。

Line 5

天門開108闔，能為雌乎。

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

MWD

天門啟闔，能為雌乎。

Line 6

明白四達，能無知乎。

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

MWD

明白四達，能毋以知乎。

Line 7

生之，畜之。生，而不有，為，而不恃109，長，而不宰，是謂玄德。

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

MWD

生之，蓄之。生，而弗有。長，而弗宰也。是謂玄德。112

Chapter 11 第十一章

Line 1

三十幅共一轂，當其無，有車之用。

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

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105 In MWD versions A and B, dí 濕 (to clean, wash or cleanse) is xiū 僑 (repair or cultivate).
106 In the MWD versions A and B, lǎn 覽 is jiàn 監, which can both mean “inspect.”
107 In the MWD version B, zhì 治 (govern) is guā 栢 (the pointed end of an arrow).
108 The MWD version B uses qǐ 啟 instead of kāi 開, they both mean “open.”
109 In the MWD versions A and B, these four characters are omitted.
110 In chapter 51, line 5, we have the same words: produce, yet not [to] have, [to] act, yet not depend [on], [to] grow, yet not [to] slaughter. [This] is called, profound quiescence.
111 In terms of the meaning of dé, see appendix 1, pg. 163.
112 In MWD version B, in line 7, bù 不 is fú 弗 and wèi 謂 (called) is wèi 胃 (stomach, which can also mean “called”).
113 In MWD versions A and B, sānshí 三十 (30) is sà 卅 (30).
114 In the MWD version B, fú 幅 (width or hem/margin) and gòng 共 (common) are bì 楅 (wooden board) and tóng 同 (alike or together). Both fú 幅 and bì 楅 are clearly trying to refer to fú; spokes (of a wheel).
MWD
卅#掤同一穀，當其無，有車之用也。

Line 2
埏埴以為器，當其無，有器之用。
Mould clay so [as to] make [a] vessel, by its emptiness, [the] vessel has use.

MWD
然埴，而為器，當其無，有埴器之用也。

Line 3
鑿戶牖以為室115，當其無，有室之用。
Chisel [a] door [and] window, so [as to] make [a] room, by its emptiness [the] room has use.

MWD
#戶牖###，當其無，有室之用也。

Line 4
故，有之以為利，無之以為用。116
Therefore, [in] having, so [lies] the benefit, [in] emptiness, so [lies] the use.

MWD
故，有之以有，無之以為用。

Chapter 12 第十二章117

Line 1
五色令118人目盲，
[The] five colours cause [a] person’s eyes [to go] blind.

MWD
五色使人目盲119，

Line 2
五音令人耳聾，
[The] five sounds cause [a] person’s ears [to go] deaf.

MWD (see line 4)
馳騁田臘，使人心發狂，

Line 3
五味令人口爽，
[The] five tastes cause [a] person’s mouth [to go] bland.

115 In the MWD versions A and B, yǐwéishì 以為室 (so [as to] make a room) is omitted.
116 In this chapter Lǎozǐ is comparing the opposing characters of yǒu 有 and wú 無; sometimes translated as being and non being, in that they are like two faces of the same coin. The idea of duality is used throughout the entire Dàodéjīng. For example, chapter 1, line 4: these two [come] out [the] same, yet [are] named differently, both [are] called the profound. Chapter 2, line 2: therefore, [to] have [and] not [have] mutually create, difficult [and] easy mutually become, long [and] short mutually shape, high [and] low mutually lean, voice [and] sound mutually harmonise, front [and] back mutually follow. The idea of wú wéi 無為 is also an idea of opposites with wú being the nothing/ness and emptiness, while wéi 為 is action, movement or activity.
117 In chapter 12, we find the MWD versions in a different order.
118 In the MWD versions A and B, líng 令 (cause) is shǐ 使 (make) and is the same throughout the chapter.
119 In the MWD version A, this line reads, 五色使人目明 ([the] five colours make [a] person’s eyes bright).
MWD (see line 5)
難得之貨，使人之行方。

Line 4
馳騁畋獵，令人心發狂，
Galloping horses (horse racing) [and] hunting cause [a] person’s heart [to] go mad.

MWD (see line 3)
五味使人之口爽。

Line 5
難得之貨，令人行妨。
Hard [to] get goods cause [a] person [to] do harm.

MWD (see line 2)
五音使人之耳聾。

Line 6
是以，聖人，為腹不為目，故，去彼取此。
So, [the] sage does [with his] abdomen [and does] not do [with his] eyes, therefore, [he] leaves that [and] gets this.

MWD
是以，聖人，之治也，為腹，而不為目，故，去彼，而取此。
So, the sage, manages [by] doing [with his] abdomen and not [with his] eyes, therefore [he] leaves that, yet [he] gets this.

Chapter 13 第十三章

Line 1
寵辱若驚，貴大患若身。

MWD
寵辱若驚，貴大患若身。

Line 2
何謂寵辱若驚。
What [is] called [take] favours [and] humiliations like surprises?

MWD
何謂寵辱若驚。

Line 3
寵辱若驚，贵大患若身。 
Humiliations are below (disgraces), [to] get [them is] like [a] surprise, [to] lose [them is also] like [a] surprise.

120 In the MWD versions A and B, tiá nlèiè 畏獵 (go hunting) is tià nlà 田臘 (the first character is a field, the second can mean cured meat, or the end of year sacrifice that took place shortly after the winter solstice).
121 The abdomen probably refers to the stomach, and is a simile that means, all one needs in life, is to have enough food to be satisfied. The eyes are probably a simile for desires. See chapter 3, line 4: so, [the] sage manages [by] emptying the heart, filling the abdomen, weakening the will [and] strengthening the bones.
122 In the MWD version A, these last six characters are: 故，去罷耳此. They have the same meaning.
123 In the MWD version A, chǒng 寵 (favour) is lò ng 弄 (lane or alley).
124 In the MWD version A, hé 何 (what, which) is kē 苦 (harsh or severe).
[this] is [what is] called [taking] favours [and] humiliations like surprises.

**MWD**
寵之為下，得之若驚，失之若驚，是胃龍辱若驚。

**Line 4**
何謂貴大患若身，
What [is] called value great troubles like [the] body.

**MWD**
何胃貴大患若身。

**Line 5**
吾所以有大患者，為吾有身，及吾無身，吾有何患，
[Because] I so have great troubles, [so] I have [a] body, if I [did] not [have a] body, what troubles [would] I have?

**MWD**
吾所以有大患者，為吾有身也，及吾無身，有何患。

**Line 6**
故，貴以身為天下，若可寄天下。
Therefore, value [the] body as [though it was like everything] underneath [the] sky (world); as if [everything] underneath [the] sky could depend [on it].

**MWD**
故，貴以身為天下，若可重天下。

**Line 7**
以身為天下，若可託天下。
The body is [like everything that is] underneath [the] sky (world); as if [all that are] underneath [the] sky could be entrusted [with it].

**MWD**
以身為天下，女何以寄天下。

**Chapter 14 第十四章**

**Line 1**
視之不見，名曰夷。聽之不聞，名曰希。

---

125 In the MWD version B, jì 寄 (depend on) is tuó 襄 (a sack or type of bag that opens on both ends).
126 In the MWD versions A and B, tuō 託 (entrust) is jì 寄 (depend on).
127 The characters yuē 言 and wèi 謂 can both mean “call/ed,” “name/d” or “speak/spoke.” These translations are used except when it says míngyuē 名曰; in this case “named” is always used for the translation, as the character míng 名 means “name.”
128 It is interesting to note that the character yí 夷 means to “wipe out” or “exterminate” or “non-Han Chinese (barbarians)” in ancient Chinese. In the MWD version A and B, yí 夷 (wipe out) is wēi 微 (tiny).
129 In ancient Chinese xī 希 means “a little.”
130 In the MWD versions A and B, the character bó 提 (fight or combat) is hūn 昏 (dark or dim). In the MWD version B, this hūn is preceded by a dé 德.
To look, yet not see, [the] name [is] called faint, to listen, yet not hear, [the] name [is] called rare, to console, yet not get, [the] name [is] called disappearing.

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

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

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

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

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

---

131 In the MWD version B, míng 名 (name) in this sentence is mìng 命 (life) in this chapter.
132 In the MWD versions A and B, zhì jié 致詰 (to cause questioning) is zhì jì 至計 (reach a plan or strategy). A translation for zhì is omitted in this line.
133 In the MWD version B, jiǎo 皦 (bright) is miù 謹 (deceive or confuse), in the MWD version A it is shōu 收 (receive, collect, restrain, contract or put away).
134 In the MWD bù méi 不昧 (not dark) is bù hū 不忽 (not all of sudden or no neglect).
135 The character shéng 縛 means “restraining,” Làozi may have chosen this character in the way the Dào restrains itself from being seen. In the MWD versions A and B, another character is used, which is xún 寻; in ancient China, this was a unit of measure equal to about 8 inches, it also means “search,” “look for” or “seek.”
136 In the MWD version B, hū 惚 (dim) and huǎng 惚 (indistinct) are hū 忽 (all of sudden or neglect) and wàng 健 (distant). The character wàng is especially difficult to translate but probably means in the context of this sentence, “to gaze into the distance,” therefore, the translation is distant.
137 In MWD version B, suízhī 隨之 is yíngé 迎而.
138 In the MWD versions A and B, gǔ 古 (ancient) is jīn 今 (modern or present day).
MWD
執今之道，以御今之有。
Grasp now the Dà o, so as to have it driven into the now.

Line 7
能知古始，是謂道紀。
[To be] able [to know] the ancient beginnings is called [the] chronicles [of] Dà o.

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

Chapter 15 第十五章

Line 1
古之善為士者，微妙玄通，深不可識。夫唯，不可識，故，強為之容。
The ancients [who were] good [at being] scholars, [were] faint, mysterious, profound [and] open, [they were so] deep [you could not know them]. Now, only [because you could not know them], therefore, [I am] compelled to [describe their] appearance.

MWD
古之不為道者，微眇玄達，深不可志。夫唯，不可志，故，強為之容。
The ancients [who were] immortal [were with] the Dà o, [they were] faint, mysterious, profound, reaching, [and so] deep [you could not know their will]. Now, only [because you could not know their will], therefore [I am] compelled to [describe their] appearance.

Line 2
豫焉，若冬涉川。猶兮，若畏四鄰。儼兮，其若客。浼兮，其若凌泽。
呵·亓若濁·莊呵·亓若浴。


**Line 3**
孰能濁以靜之徐清。
What [is] able [to change] muddy [water], so [that it is] gradually still?

**MWD**

濁·而靜之徐清。
[If] muddy [water is] stilled, [it will] gradually [become] clear.

**Line 4**
孰能安以久動之徐生。

**MWD**

女以重之徐生。
Preserve this Dà o [and do] not desire [to fill it], now only [because you do] not desire [to fill it], so [you are] able [to ruin it, yet not complete [the use of it].

**Chapter 16 第十六章**

**Line 1**
致虛極，守靜篤。
Arrive [at the] utmost void, abide [by] genuine stillness.

**MWD**

致虛極也，守靜篤也。

**Line 2**
萬物並作，吾以觀復。夫，物芸芸，各復歸其根。歸根曰靜，是謂復命。復命曰常，知常曰明。

**MWD**

萬物旁作，吾以觀其復也。天物##，各復歸其根##曰靜，靜是謂復命。復命，常也，知常，#明也。

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

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

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

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

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

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

163 In the MWD versions A and B, bìng並 (together) is pang伴 (close by).
不知常，妄作凶，
知常容，容乃公，公乃王，王乃天，天乃道，道乃久，没身不殆。

不知常芒妄作凶，知常容，容乃公，公乃王，王乃天，天乃道，道乃久，没身不殆。

Chapter 17 第十七章

太上，下知有之，其次，親而譽之，其次，畏之，其次，侮之。

信不足焉，有不信焉。

悠兮，其貴言。

功成事遂，百姓皆謂我自然。

164 In the MWD version A, méi 沒 (not have) is wù 沕 (it most likely meant “no” or “not” during this period in history).
165 In the MWD version B, wàng 妄 (absurd) is máng 芒 (edge of a knife).
166 In the MWD version A, xīong 凶 (inauspicious) is xīong 兇 (fearful or act of violence).
167 In the MWD versions A and B, tài 太 (great) is dà 大 (big).
168 In the MWD versions A and B, wǔ 妨 (insult) is mǔ 母 (mother).
169 In the MWD version A, yān 焉 is àn 案 (but in this case has the same use as in ān), in version B it is ān 安, in the Guōdiàn it is ān 安 (in this case it is an adverb used in a rhetorical question).
170 Here we see the grammar word yān 焉 again, but in this case it doubled up. What this indicates is an affirmative tone.
171 For a discussion on zì rá n 自然 (nature or natural), see appendix 1, pg. 165.
Chapter 18 第十八章

Line 1
大道廢,有仁義。
[When the] great Dào [is] disregarded [there is] benevolence [and] righteousness. 173

MWD
故174,大道廢,案175有仁義。

Line 2
慧智176出,有大偽。

MWD
知慧出,案有大偽。

Line 3
六親不和,有孝慈。
[When the] six blood relations177 [are] not [in] harmony, [there is] filial piety [and] parental affection.

MWD
六親178不和,案有孝179慈。

Line 4
國180家昏亂,有忠臣。
[When the] state [and] royal house [are in] darkness [and a] mess, [then there are] loyal ministers.

MWD
國家昏亂,案有貞臣。

Chapter 19 第十九章

Line 1
絕聖棄智,民利百倍。

MWD
絕聖182棄知,民利百倍183。

Line 2
絕仁棄義,民復孝184慈185。

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173 This line may be understood in the way that as soon as someone has expensive goods, he or she must protect them from robbers.
174 Here we see the character gù 故 (therefore), meaning that this chapter clearly follows on from the previous one.
175 In MWD version B, this is ān 安. The same change is made throughout the chapter.
176 In the MWD version A, huìzhì 慧智 (intelligence and wisdom) is zhīkuài 知快 (knowledge and cleverness), in version B it is zhīhuì 知慧 (knowledge and wisdom).
177 If not a direct translation the six blood relations could just be understood as family.
178 In the Guōdiàn, qīn 親 (relative) is xīn 新 (new).
179 In the MWD version A, xiào 孝 (filial piety) is xù 畜 (raise).
180 In the MWD version A and the Guōdiàn, guó 國 (state) is bāng 邦 (state).
181 In the MWD versions A and B, zhōng 忠 (loyal) is zhēn 真 (loyal) and in the Guōdiàn it is zhèng 正 (upright).
182 See n.45.
183 In the MWD version A, bèi 悖 (times as a multiplier) is fù 負 (to carry on ones back or be defeated).
184 See n.179.

**MWD**

絕仁棄義，而民復孝慈。

**Line 3**

絕巧棄利，盜賊無有。

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

**MWD**

絕巧棄利，盜賊無有。

**Line 4**

此三者，以為文不足，故，令有所屬，見素抱樸，少私寡欲。186

These three [are] not enough to be [a] doctrine, therefore, have [an] affiliation [with] seeing [the] plainness, embracing simplicity [and] lessening [the] self187 [with] few desires.

**MWD**

此三言也，以為文未足，故，令之有所屬，見素抱樸，少，而寡欲。

Chapter 20 第二十章

**Line 1**

絕學無憂，唯之與阿，相去幾何。善之與惡，相去若何。人之所畏，不可不畏。

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

**MWD**

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

**Line 2**

荒兮，其未央哉。眾人熙熙，如享太牢，如登春臺。我獨泊兮，其未兆，如嬰之未孩。


185 In MWD version A, cí 慈 (kind or loving) is cí 茲 (now).
186 Sometimes Chinese sentences are backwards when compared to English, therefore, in some translations such as in this line, I have had to flip the words at the back to the front.
187 This idea of lessening the self may be the earliest mention in China of an ego-like concept. Sometimes this sī 私 character is translated as “selfishness.” If we look at chapter 7, line 2 we can see that the character sī 私 cannot mean selfishness and must mean “self” for the Chinese sentence to make sense.
188 Yǔ 與 can be translated as “and.” Yǔ can sometimes expresses doubt and is sometimes translated as “with,” where it means “to participate in.”
189 In the MWD versions A and B, shàn 善 (good) is měi 美 (beautiful).
190 Wèi 唯 may have been used by younger generations to answer elders and ē 阿, may have been used by older generations to answer younger generations.
191 In the Guodian this is wáng 死 (to die, to lose, to flee) but is missing in the MWD.
192 In the MWD version A, ā 阿 is ā 阿 and in version B it is ā 阿. They all mean “ah.”
193 In the MWD version B and the Guodian, è 恶 (ugly) is yà 亞 (inferior).
194 In the MWD version B, huáng 荒 (desolate) is wáng 王 (gaze into the distance).
195 In the MWD versions A and B, xiǎng 享 (enjoy) is xiāng 鄉 (village).
196 In the MWD version B, hài 孩 is ké 咳.
197 The character ké 咳 (a babies giggle or laugh) is also the alternative form of hài 孩 (child).
MWD

朢呵, 亓未央, 才众人熙熙, 若乡于大牢, 而春登台, 我#博焉, 未佼, 若婴儿#未啇。


Line 3

儒儒79兮, 若199无所归。众人都有余, 而我独若遗, 我愚人之心也哉。

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

MWD

#儒儒, 如无所归。众人都有余, #我独#遗, 我愚人之心也#。

Line 4

沌沌200兮, 俗201人昭昭, 我独昏昏。俗人察察, 我独悶悶202。


MWD

春春呵, 窈人昭昭, 我独昏昏呵。窈人察察, 我独昏昏呵。203

Line 7

沌沌兮, 其若海, 飂兮, 若无止。众人都有以, 而我独顽似鄙。

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

MWD

忽兮, 其若海, 朢兮, 若无所止。众人都有以, #我独门元以鄙。

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

Line 8

我独203异于人, 而贵食母。

I alone [am] different [from other] people because [I] treasure feeding [on the] mother.209

MWD

吾欲独异于人, 而贵食母。

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

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198 In the MWD version A, lěi 優 (lazy) is lèi 累 (tired) and in the MWD version B it is léi 累 (tired).
199 In the MWD version A, ruò 若 (as if, like) is rú 如 (as if, like) and in the MWD version B it is yǐ 佁 (foolish).
200 In the MWD version B, dùn 沸 (confused) is chǔn 春 (spring) and the MWD version A it is chǔn 蠢 (foolish).
201 In the MWD version B, sú 俗 (customs) is yù 售 (to vend or sell).
202 In the MWD version B, mèn 悶 (depressed) is mǐn 閩 (which was a name), in the MWD version A it is hūn 昏 (muddled).
203 In some versions of MWD B this line is interpreted as 湛湛呵, 窈人昭昭, 我独若咀呵, 我独鬱鬱呵, 我独昏昏呵.
204 In the MWD versions A and B, dàn 窈 (peaceful) is hū 忽 (overlook or neglect).
205 In the MWD version A, liáo 窈 (wind in high places) is wàng 望 (to gaze into the distance), in version B it is also wàng 望 but in a different script.
206 This line appears to be referring to the feeling of contentment when one does not have any desires or aspirations.
207 See n. 206.
208 In the MWD version A, wǒdú 我独 is wú yù 吾欲.
209 The mother here probably refers to the Dào.
Chapter 21 第二十一章

Line 1
孔德之容，惟道是从。
The appearance [of the] quiescence [of] emptiness only comes from [the] Dà o.

MWD
孔德之容，道是從。

Line 2
道之為物，惟恍惟惚。
[If] Dà o is [a] thing, [it is] only indistinct [and] only dim.

MWD
道之物，惟恍惟惚。

Line 3
惚兮，恍兮，其中有象，恍兮，惚兮，其中有物。
Dim ah, indistinct ah, [in] its middle [it] has [an] image, vague ah, indistinct ah, [in] its middle [it] has something.

MWD
惚呵，恍呵，#中有象呵，恍呵，惚呵，#中有物呵。

Line 4
窈兮，冥兮，其中有精，其精甚真，其中有信。

MWD
幽呵，冥呵，#中有請呵，其請甚真，其中有信。

Line 5
自古及今，其名不去，以閲眾甫。

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

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

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

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

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

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

216 In the MWD versions A and B, fù 父 (father) is fǔ 父 (father).

217 Both lines 4 and 5 can come across very confusing but do follow strictly to Lǎozǐ’s theme of returning to the source (Dào).

Both lines 4 and 5 can come across very confusing but do follow strictly to Lǎozǐ’s theme of returning to the source (Dào).
Chapter 22 第二十二章

Line 1 曲則全，枉則正，洼則盈，敝則新，少則得，多則惑。是以，聖人抱一為天下式。
Bent so as to become whole, crooked so as to become straight, hollow so as to become full, harmed so as to become new, little so as to have, much so as to become confused. So, [the] sage holds [on to the] one [and] becomes [a] pattern (model) [for everything that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD 曲則全，枉則正，洼則盈，少則得，多則惑。是以，聖人執一以為天下牧。

Line 2 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。
Not self-seeing, therefore bright, not self-existing, therefore clear, not boastful [of one] self, [and] therefore [to] have skill, not self-important, therefore long [lasting]. Now, only [because he does] not contend, therefore, nothing underneath [the] sky [is] able [to] contend [with him].

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

Line 3 古之所謂曲則全者，豈虛言哉，誠全，而歸之。
[What] the ancients so called bent, so as to become whole, how empty [are these] words! ? Sincere [and] whole, yet [also to] return.

MWD 古之所謂曲全者，豈幾言哉。誠全而歸之。

Chapter 23 第二十三章

Line 1 希言自然，故，飄風不終朝，驟雨不終日。
In the MWD version B, wǎng枉 (crooked) is wāng汪 (vast, expansive, deep).
In the MWD versions A and B, bào抱 (hold) is zhí执 (hold). For this idea of embracing the one, see chapter 10, line 1.
In the MWD versions A and B, shì式 (pattern) is mù牧 (in modern Chinese this character means “to attend sheep,” in ancient Chinese it means “to govern,” it also meant “a government official”).
In the MWD version A, quán全 (whole) in jīn金 (gold).
In the MWD version A, zhí直 (straight) is dìng定 (fix or stable), and in the MDW version B it is zhèng正 (rectify, straighten).
In the MWD versions A and B, wā洼 (low-lying, depression) is wā洼 (low-lying, depression).
In the MWD versions A and B, jiàn見 (see) is shì视 (look).
In the MWD version A, zhāng彰 (clear) is míng明 (bright) and in version B it is zhāng章 (figured robe of officials). Some MWD versions have these flipped in order.
In the MWD version B, míng明 (bright) is zhāng章 (figured robe of officials).
In the MWD version B, qǐ豈 means to “ask a rhetorical question.” The character qǐ豈 means to “ask a rhetorical question.”
In the MWD version B, qíxū言哉 is jǐyǔ言哉 几語哉.
In the MWD versions A and B, zhòng终 (end) is dōng冬 (this can mean “winter,” or is an alternate from of dōng咚 which means “bang” or “thud”).
In the MWD versions A and B, zhòu驟 (sudden) is bàobáo暴 (sudden).

**MWD**
希言自然，風不冬朝，暴雨不冬日。

**Line 2**
孰為此者，天地，天地尚不所能久，而況於人乎。

**MWD**
孰為此，天地，而弗能久，而兄於人乎。

**Line 3**
故，從事於道者，道者，同於道，德者，同於德，失者，同於失。
Therefore, [in] engaging [with] affairs [and being with the] Dà o, [one needs to be the] same as [the] Dà o. [To be part of] quiescence, [one needs to be the] same as quiescence. [To be part of] loss, [one needs to be the] same as loss.

**MWD**
故，從事，而道者，同於道，德者，同於德，失者，同於失，

**Line 4**
同於道者，道亦樂得之，同於德者，德亦樂得之，同於失者，失亦樂得之。
[To be the] same as [the] Dà o [is to] also have happiness [with] the Dà o. [To be the] same as quiescence [is to] also have happiness [with] quiescence. [To be the] same as loss [is to] also to have happiness [with] loss.

**MWD**
同於道者，道亦，同於德者，德亦，同於失者，失亦。

**Line 5**
信不足焉，有不信焉。
[When there is] not enough trust, [then there is] no trust.

**MWD**

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**Chapter 24 第二十四章**

**Line 1**
企者，不立，跨者，不行，自見者，不明，自是者，不彰，自伐者，無功，自矜者，不長。

**MWD**
炊者，不立，而，自矜239者，不長240，自見者，不明，自伐者，無功，自矜者，不長。

---

234 In the MWD version B, piāo (whirlwind) is lì (tremble or shudder).
235 In the MWD version B, shàngbù (still not) is érfú 而弗 (yet not).
236 In the MWD version B, kuàng (condition or situation) is xiōng 兄 (brother).
237 In the MWD versions A and B, qí 企 (stand on tiptoes) is chuī 炊 (cook).
238 See chapter 22, line 2 for a very similar line.
239 See n.227.
Line 2
其在道也，曰餘食贅形。物或惡之，故，有道者，不處。
In [the] Dào this [is also] called excessive food [and] superfluous appearances. Avoided [by] things, therefore, [this] has no dwelling (place) [with the] Dào.

MWD
其在道也，曰餘食贅行，物或惡之，故，有欲者，弗居。

Chapter 25 第二十五章

Line 1
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。
[There was some] thing mixed becoming, [it was] before [the] sky [and] produced [the] earth, still ah, silent ah, standing alone, [with] no change, moving cyclically, yet without danger (end), [it] can [be the] mother [of all that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD
有物昆成，先天地生，蕭呵，漻呵，獨立，而 不改，可以為天地母。

Line 2
吾不知其名，字之曰，道。
I [do] not know its name, the word [I use to] call [it is] Dà o.

MWD
吾未知其名，字之曰，道。

Line 3
強為之名曰大，大曰逝，逝曰遠，遠曰反。
[If] forced to name [it], [it is] called great, great [is] called the passing of time, [the] passing of time [is] called far, far [is] called returning.

MWD
吾強為之名曰大，大曰筮，筮曰遠，遠曰反。

241 Both MWD versions A and B use zhāng 章 (figured robe of officials).
242 In the MWD versions A and B, xíng 形 (appearance) is xíng 行 (behaviour).
243 In the MWD version A and B, Dà o 道 is yù 欲 (desire).
244 It is likely that the theory of yin and yang is one that was purely based on the observation of the seasons. Winter cannot exist without summer and vice versa, the seasons are cyclic, there is hot in cold and cold in hot (in the way night and day time temperatures vary), when the longest day reached its zenith, then it switches to the opposite, whereby days start getting shorter. This chapter is discussing this fourth idea of no zeniths, for if a zenith is reached the opposite comes forth. We see this concept throughout the Dàodéjīng in various forms. Some examples include, chapter 9, line 5: [after a] deed [is] satisfied (finished), [the] body withdrawals, [this is] the sky’s Dào. Chapter 15, line 5: protect this Dào [and do] not desire [to] fill [it], now only [because you do] not fill [it], therefore, [you are] able [to] hide [it and] not complete [the use of it]. Both chapter 32 and 44 use the characters 知止 which means “know when to stop,” or “know when enough is enough.”
245 See n. 83.
246 In the MWD versions A and B, hùn 混 (mixed) is kun 昆 (simultaneously), in the Guōdiàn it is chōng 蟲 (insects).
247 In the MWD version B, jì 寂 (still) is xiāo 蕭 (desolate), in version A it is xiū 繡 (rich and bright colours or embroidery).
248 In the MWD version B, liáo 窮 (silent) is liáo 漏 (quiet or silent), in version A it is mù 複 (solemn or calm).
249 In the MWD versions A and B, tiān下 天 (under the sky) is tiàndì 天地 (sky and earth).
250 For a discussion on the Dào, see appendix 1, pg. 163.
Line 4
故，大，天大，地大，王亦大。域中有四大，而王居其一焉。
Therefore, there is the great Dà o, great sky, great earth [and the] king [who is] also great. Within [the] realm [there are] four greats and [the] king’s residence is one [of them].

MWD
#，道大，天大，地大，王亦大，國中有四大，而王居#一焉。

Line 5
人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。
Man patterns (models) [him-self on the] earth, [the] sky patterns (models) [it-self on the] Dà o [and the] Dà o patterns (models) [it-self on] nature.

MWD
人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。

Chapter 26 第二十六章

Line 1
重為輕根，靜為躁君。
Heavy is root [to the] light, quiet is [the] monarch [to the] irritable.

MWD
重為輕根，靜為躁君。

Line 2
是以，聖人終日行，不離輜重。
So, [the] sage travels [until the] end [of the] day [but does] not part from [the] baggage wagon.

MWD
是以，君子冬行，不離其甾重。
So, a man of noble character travels [to the] end [of the] day [but does] not leave the baggage wagon.

Line 3
雖有榮觀，燕處超然。
Although [there are] glorious [places to] see [and] places [of] banquets, [he remains] detached [from them].

MWD
雖有環官，燕處則昭若。

---

252 In the MWD versions A and B, yù 域 (realm) is guó 國 (state).
253 This may refer to the place where the king actually sits.
254 In the MWD version A, qīng 輕 (light) is jīng 倩 (flowing water or underground stream). This is the same in line 5.
255 In the MWD versions A and B, zī 輕 (as a stand-alone character means “a carriage that has a curtain”) is zī 甾 (which is the name of an ancient earthen alcohol vessel but in this case is most likely a mistake by the scribe).
256 See n.300.
257 In the MWD version B, zhōng 終 (end) is dōng 冬 (this can mean “winter,” or is an alternate from of dōng 咚 which means “bang” or “thud”), in the MWD version A, this character is zhòng 異 (multitudinous).
258 In the MWD version A, sūi 虽 (although) is wéi 唯 (only or but).
259 In the MWD versions A and B, yōngguān 榮觀 is huángguān 環宮 (the meaning of these words are unclear but they probably refer to a guesthouse.).
260 In the MWD versions A and B, rán 然 (so; it is also an adjective suffix) is ruò 若 (as if, seems like, in the case of this sentence, it is used in the same way as rán).
Line 4
奈何萬乘之主，而以身輕天下。

MWD
若何萬乘之主，而以身輕於天下。

Line 5
輕則失根，躁則失君。
Light so as to lose [the] root, irritable so as to lose [the] monarch.

MWD
輕則失本，躁則失君。

Chapter 27 第二十七章

Line 1
善行無徹跡，善言無瑕謫，善數不用籌策，善閉無關楗，而不可開，善結無繩約，而不可解。

MWD
善行者，無徹跡，善言者，無瑕適，善數者，不用槧策，善閉者，無關籥，而不可啟也，善結者，無繩約，而不可解也。

Line 2
是以，聖人常善救人，故，無棄人。
So, [the] sage [is] constantly good [at] saving [the] people, therefore, no person [is] abandoned.

MWD
是以，聖人恆善救人，而無棄人。

Line 3
常善救物，故，無棄物，是謂襲明。
Constant goodness rescues things, therefore, nothing [is] abandoned, [this] is called inheriting [the] brightness.

MWD
物無棄財，是謂申明。

---

261 In the MWD versions A and B, nà 奈 (how) is ruò 若 (as if, seems like).
262 In the MWD versions A and B, gēn 根 (root) is běn 本 (origin).
263 In the MWD version A, zhé 轟 (track of wheel) is chè 勖 (thorough or penetrating) or chè 勖 (in other MWD versions A) and in version B it is dá 达 (reach or attain).
264 In the MWD versions A and B, shāng 謫 (to consult, deliberate or commerce) is shì 舍 (be fit, be suitable, be proper, to follow or pursue).
265 In the MWD versions A and B, jiàn 捷 (bolt) is yuè 纂 (lock).
266 In MWD versions A and B, kāi 開 (open) is qǐ 於 (open).
267 In the MWD version B, shéng 繩 (rope) is mò 纔 (rope).
268 In the MWD version A, chóu 篤 (prepare, plan or a token for counting) is táo 摹 (block of wood), in the MWD version B it is tuán 總 (to divine with bamboo slips).
269 In the MWD versions cháng 常 (constant) is héng 恆 (constant). This is such a common occurrence, I will not note it again.
270 In the MWD versions A and B, wù 物 (things) is cái 財 (valuables).
271 In the MWD version A, xī 襲 (inhibit) is shēn 申 (explain) and in the MWD version B it is yè 曰 (tow, pull or drag).
Things [do] not abandon riches, [this] is called explaining [the] brightness.

**Line 4**

故，善人者，不善人之師，不善人者，善人之資。
Therefore, good people [are] the not good people’s teacher, [the] not good people [are] the good people’s capital.

**MWD**

故，善##，不善人之師，不善人，善人之資##也。
Therefore, good [is the] good people’s teacher, [the] not good people [are] the good people’s capital.

**Line 5**

不貴其師，不愛其資，雖智##大迷，是謂要妙##。
[Do] not value [the] teacher [and do] not love the capital, although [this] wisdom [is] greatly confusing, [it] is called [the] essential mystery.

**MWD**

不貴其師，不愛其資，雖知##大迷，是謂要妙。
[Do] not value [the] teacher [and do] not love the capital, although [this] wisdom [is] greatly confusing, [it] is called [the] essential mystery.

**Chapter 28 第二十八章**

**Line 1**

知其雄，守其雌，為天下谿。為天下谿，常德不離，復歸於嬰兒。
Know the male [but] abide [by] the female, [this is] to be [the] ravine [of all that is] underneath [the] sky. To be [the] ravine [of all that is] underneath [the] sky [is to] not part [from the] constant quiescence [and] again return [to the] infant.

**MWD**

知其雄，守其雌，為天下溪。為天下溪，恆德不離，復歸於嬰兒。
Know the male [but] abide [by] the female, [this is] to be [the] ravine [of all that is] underneath [the] sky. To be [the] ravine [of all that is] underneath [the] sky [is to] not part [from the] constant quiescence [and] again return [to the] infant.

**Line 2**

知其白，守其黑，為天下式。為天下式，常德不忒，復歸於無極。
Know the white [but] abide [by] the black, [this is] to be [the] pattern (model) [of all that is] underneath [the] sky. To be [the] pattern (model) [of all that is] underneath [the] sky [is to be] constantly quiescence [with] no mistakes [and] again [to] return [to the] utmost emptiness.

**MWD** (see line 3)

知其白，守其點性，為天下浴。為天下浴，恆德乃足。恆德乃足，復歸於樸。
Know the white [but] abide [by] its dishonour, [this is] to be [the] valley [of all that is] underneath the sky. To be [the] valley [of all that is] underneath the sky, [is to] therefore, [be] full [in] constant quiescence [and] again [to] return [to] simplicity.

**Line 3**

知其榮，守其辱，為天下谷。為天下谷，常德乃足，復歸於樸。
Know the honour [but] abide [by] its dishonour, [this is] to be [the] valley [of all that is] underneath the sky. To be [the] valley [of all that is] underneath the sky, [is to] therefore, [be] full [in] constant quiescence [and] again [to] return [to] simplicity.

---

272 In the MWD version A, zī 資 (capital or resources) is jī 施 (to bring). This is the same in line 5.
273 In the MWD versions A and B, zhì 智 (wisdom) is zhī 知 (knowledge).
274 In the MWD versions A and B, yàomiǎo 要妙 (essential mystery) is miǎoyào 矧要 (miniscule essential).
275 In the MWD version A, sūi 虽 (although) is wéi 唯 (only).
276 In the MWD version A, mí 迷 (confused) is mí 眠 (to be blinded).
277 In the MWD version A, xī 溪 (stream) is jī 雞 (chicken).
278 In the MWD version A, lǐ 離 (is jī 雞 (chicken).
279 In the MWD version A, tè 贅 (error) is dài 贅 (to forgive) and in MWD version B it is dàì 貸 (to borrow or lend).
280 Wújí 無極 could be translated as “the utmost of emptiness.” In this same line above, we see a common theme within the Dàodéjīng which is this idea of return or returning. See appendix 1, pg. 166 for further details.
MWD (see line 2)
知其白, 守其黑, 為天下式。為天下式, 恆德不貣, 恆德不貣, 復歸於無極。

Line 4
樸散則為器, 聖人用之則為官長, 故, 大制不割。
[When] simplicity scatters [then there] will be [an] implement, [the] sage uses [the implement, so there] will be [an] official, therefore, [a] great establishment [does] not cut.

MWD
樸散則為器, 聖人用之則為官長, 故, 大制不割。

Chapter 29 第二十九章

Line 1
將欲取天下, 而為之, 吾見其不得已。
[One who] desires [to] take [all that is] underneath [the] sky and act [up on it], I see they [will] never obtain [it].

MWD
將欲取天下, 而為之, 吾見其不得已。

Line 2
天下神器, 不可為也。
[Everything that is] underneath [the] sky [is like a] spirit implement [and] cannot be acted [upon].

MWD
夫天下神器也, 非可為者也。

Line 3
為者, 敗之; 執者, 失之。
[To] act [is to] fail, [to] hold [is to] lose.

MWD
為者, 敗之; 執者, 失之。

Line 4
故, 物, 或行, 或隨, 或歆284 或吹285 或強286 或羸287, 或挫288 或隳289。
Therefore, things either move or follow, either breath out through the nose or puff, [are] either [just] strong or [they are actually] winning, [things are] either flexed or [they are] destroyed.

MWD
物, 或行, 或隨, 或歆, 或吹, 或強, 或羸, 或挫, 或隳。

281 In the MWD version A, pǔ 樸 (simplicity) is wò 帳 (tent).
282 By adding the character 且 已, the “not” turns into “never.”
283 In this chapter, Lǎozǐ explains the idea of wéi 為, which means “to do,” “to act,” or “to be” and is the opposite of wú 無 or emptiness. As we learnt in chapter 2, these two cannot exist apart from each other, for according to Lǎozǐ if there is no A, then there cannot be a B. Therefore, it seems as though Lǎozǐ combines these two opposing concepts into one; the action of emptiness.
284 In the MWD version A, xū歆 (blow through the nose) is jìong 燈 (shine or bright).
285 In the MWD version B, chuī 吹 (puff) is suí 隋 (the name of the Sui dynasty). In archaic Chinese, sui appears to have the following forms: 墮 (to fall, to degenerate), 懶 (lazy), 坍 (to destroy) and 嚴 (oval-shaped container, long and narrow, oval-shaped or elliptical).
286 In the MWD version B, qiáng 強 (strong) is rè 熱 (heat).
287 In the MWD version B, yíng 燄 (win) is zuò 坐 (to bear).
288 In the MWD version B, cuò 挫 (flex) is péi 陪 (to assist) and in the MWD version A it is huái 坏 (bad/spoiled).
289 In the MWD versions A and B, huī 坏 (ruin) is duò 墮 (ruin).
Things either move or follow, shine or degenerate, [are] either heating or bearing [fruit], [are] either assisting or ruining.

**Line 5**

是以，聖人去甚，去奢


**MWD**

是以，聖人去甚，去大，去楮。

**Chapter 30 第三十章**

**Line 1**

以道佐人主者，不以兵强天下，其事好還。

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

**MWD**

以道佐人主，不以兵強於天下。

**Line 2**

師之所處，荊棘生焉。

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

**MWD**

之所居，楚朸生之。

**Line 3**

大军之後，必有凶年。


**MWD**

### 之#，##。

**Line 4**

善者，果，而已，不敢以取强。

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

**MWD**

善者，果，而已矣，毋敢以取强焉。

**Line 5**

果，而勿矜，果，而勿伐，果，而勿驕，果，而不得已，果，而勿强。

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

---

290 In the MWD versions A and B, shē 豪 (luxurious or extravagant) is dà 大 (big).
291 In the MWD versions A, tài 泰 is chǔ 棋 (mulberry or paper) and in the MWD version B it is zhū 諸 (all).
292 In the Guódiàn, bù 不 is būgū 不谷.
293 In the MWD version B, lì 棄 (protrusions) is jí 棘 (thorns).
294 In the MWD versions A and B, bù 不 (no) is guàn 毋, which is usually an alternate form of guàn 贫 (go through). In the MWD though, this character does seem to be used as a negative.
295 In the MWD versions A and B this line is finished with; 居是胃果而強 ([the] dwelling is called filled yet strong).
MWD
果,而毋驕,果,而勿矜296,果,而#懂,果,而勿得已,居是胃果而強。

Line 6
物壯則老,是謂不道,不道早297已。298
[When] things [are] robust, [then they] will become old, [this] is called not (following the) Dào, not (following the) Dào is to have an] early end.

MWD
物壯則老,是謂不道,不道早已。

Chapter 31 第三十一章

Line 1
夫,佳兵者,不祥之器,物或惡之,故,有道者,不處。
Now, quality weapons [are] inauspicious implements, things may fear [them], therefore, [those that] have [the] Dào [do] not dwell [with them].

MWD
夫,兵者,不祥之器也,物或惡之,故,有欲者,弗居。
Now, weapons [are] inauspicious implements, things may fear [them], therefore, [those that] have desire [do] not reside [with them].

Line 2
君子居則貴左,用兵則貴右。
A man of noble character,100 [his] residence will value [the] left, [one who] uses soldiers will value [the] right.301

MWD
君子居則貴左,用兵則貴右。

Line 3
兵者,不祥之器,非君子之器,不得已,而用之,恬淡302為上。
Weapons [are] inauspicious implements, [they are] not the implements [of] a man with noble character, [only when he] has no alternative [should he] use [them], harmony and indifference are [the] highest.

MWD
故,兵者,非君子之器也,兵者,不祥之器也,不得已,而用之,鈍襲為上。
Therefore, weapons [are] not the implements [of] a man with noble character. Weapons [are] inauspicious implements, [only when he] has no alternative [should he] use [them], using a hoe303 [in] attacks [is the] highest.

296 In the Guōdiàn, jīn (self-importance) is qiáo 喬 (tall, lofty, proud).
297 In the MWD versions A and B, zǎo 早 (early) is zǎo 蚤 (nowadays this means “flea,” but in this context clearly means early).
298 Here we find another recurring theme in the Dàodéjīng. By following the Dào one may achieve longevity. This idea is mentioned by Lǎozi directly in, chapter 59, line 3.
299 See n.83.
300 The idea of Jūnzǐ 君子 is especially notable in the works of Confucius. It is commonly translated as gentleman. The translation of gentleman seems to be too open ended though. A Jūnzǐ could be translated as “a man of noble character.” The idea of being or becoming a Jūnzǐ could also be seen as the ideal man, meaning that it is more of an aspiration then it is something that is actually achievable.
301 In traditional Chinese thinking yang is right (active) and left is yin (passive).
302 In the MWD version A, tié dà n 恬淡 (harmony and indifference) is xiānxí 銛襲 (hoe attacks) and in the MWD version B it is xiānlóng 銛龍 (hoe dragon).
303 In the MWD Lǎozi recommends using a hoe in attacks as the “highest” principle. A hoe is used by farmers and not by soldiers.

117
Line 4  
勝而不美，而美之者，是樂殺人。
Winning [is] not beautiful, [if it is] beautiful, [then one] is happy [to] kill people.

MWD  
#，#勿美也，若美之#，是樂殺人也。

Line 5  
天，樂殺人者，則不可得志於天下矣。
Now, [being] happy [to] kill people is [to] not [be] able [to] have wisdom [with all that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD  
天，樂殺人#，#不可得志於天下矣。

Line 6  
吉事尚左，凶事尚右。偏將軍居左，上將軍居右，言以喪禮處之。

MWD  
是以，吉事尚左，喪事上右。是以偏將軍居左，上將軍居右，言以喪禮處之也。
So, auspicious affairs esteem [the] left [and] mourning affairs top (esteem) [the] right. So, [the] assistant general resides [on the] left, [the] chief general resides [on the] right, [that is to] say [the chief general’s] place [is at the] mourning ritual (funeral).

Line 7  
殺人之眾，以哀悲泣之，戰勝，以喪禮處之。

MWD  
殺人眾，以悲哀立之，戰勝，以喪禮處之。

Chapter 32 第三十二章

Line 1  
道常無名樸。雖小，天下莫能臣也。
[The] constant Dà o [has the] nameless simplicity. Although small, nothing underneath [the] sky can subjugate [it].

MWD  
道恆无名樸。唯小，而天下弗敢臣。
[The] Dà o [has the] nameless simplicity. [It is] only small, yet nothing underneath [the] sky dares [to] subjugate [it].

---

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

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

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

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

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

309 In the Guōdiàn, xiǎo 小 (small) is qī 妻 (wife).
Line 2
候王若能守之，萬物將自賓。
[If the] feudal lords [and] kings [are] able [to] abide [by it], [then] ten thousand things [them] selves will [be a] guest.

MWD
候王若能守之，萬物將自賓。

Line 3
天地相合，以降甘露，民莫之令而自均。

MWD
天地相合，以降甘露，民莫之令而自均。

Line 4
始制有名，名亦既有，夫亦將知止，知止可以不殆。
[In the] beginning names [are] made, [once there are] already names, [one must] now also know [when to] stop, knowing [when to] stop [and there] can [be] no danger.

MWD
始制有名，名亦既有，夫亦將知止，知止可以不殆。

Line 5
譬道之在天下，猶川谷之於江海。
[Taking the] Dà o [as an] example [for all that is] underneath [the] sky [is] like [a] river valley [that flows into the] rivers [and] ocean.

MWD
譬道之在天下，猶川谷之於江海。

Chapter 33 第三十三章
Line 1
知人者智，自知者明。
Knowing [a] person [is] wisdom, knowing [the] self [is] brightness.

MWD
知人者，智自知者，明也。
Knowing [a] person [is] knowing, knowing [the] self [is] brightness.

---

310 In this case jiāng 將 is translated as “will.”
311 In the Guōdiàn, shǒu 守 is shò u 獸 (animal).
312 In this case jiāng 將 is translated as “will.”
313 In the MWD version A, hé 合 is gū 谷.
314 In the MWD version A and B, jiāng 降 (fall or descend) is yú 俞 (approve).
315 In the MWD versions A and B, lù 露 (dew) is lù o 洛 (currently used in names).
316 In the Guōdiàn, lìng 令 (order or command) is mìng 命 (order or command).
317 In the MWD version A, pì 譬 (give an example) is bǐ 俾 (cause, enable, make), in MWD version B, it is bēi 卑 (inferior, humble, vulgar).
318 In the MWD version A, yó u 猶 (just as, like) is yó u 猶 (plan or scheme).
319 In the MWD version B, chuān 川 (river) is xiǎo 小 (small) and in the Guōdiàn it is shǎo 少 (a little).
320 In the MWD versions A and B and the Guōdiàn, gǔ 谷 (valley) is yù 浴 (bath or shower).
321 In the MWD versions A and B, yú 於 is yú 與, the direct translation of yú would be “take part in,” this has been changed to “flows into.”
Line 2
勝人者，有力，自勝者，強。
Defeating [other] people [is to] have strength, defeating [the] self [is to be] strong.

MWD
勝322也，有力也，自勝者，強也。

Line 3
知足者，富。强行者，有志。
[To] know contentedness [is to be] rich. [To] do [with] strength [is to] have aspirations.

MWD
知足者，富也。强行者，有志也。

Line 4
不失其所者，久。死，而不亡323者，壽。
[Do] not lose [yourself], so [as to last a] long time. [To] die, yet [with] no death [is to have] longevity.324
MWD
不失其所者，久也。死，而不忘也，壽也。

Chapter 34 第三十四章

Line 1
大道泛兮，其可左右。
[The] great Dà o [is] extensive ah, it can [spread to the] left [and to the] right.

MWD
#道渢325呵326，亓327可左右也。

Line 2
萬物恃之，而生，而不辞，功成不名有，衣养萬物，而不為主。
[The] ten thousand things depend [on it], yet [it] produces [with] no decline, [it] accomplishes [but] has no name (fame), [it] clothes [and] nourishes [the] ten thousand things but [does] not govern [them].328
MWD
###，###，功成遂事，而弗名有也，萬物歸焉，而弗為主。

Line 3
常無欲，可名於小，萬物歸焉，而不為主，可名為大。

322 In the MWD version B, 贏 (win) is 聰 (I the sovereign).
323 In the MWD versions A and B, 畏 (to die or to lose) is 忘 (forget, overlook, neglect).
324 As a direct translation line 4 can pose some difficulties in understanding. It maybe that Lǎozǐ is saying; it is difficult to have both success over others and over the self at the same time. Having success over the self, is to be content, which is the natural state of being. If you are in a natural state of being, which is contentment, you will live long. To give up having success over others, and instead to have success over the self, is to have a kind of death but without loss, as instead of being famous and successful (in the negative sense), one may achieve longevity. Throughout the Dàodéjīng there is a theme of not competing or non-contention. This theme is especially represented by water. Some examples include, chapter 2, line 4; chapter 3, line 1; chapter 8, line 1; chapter 22, line 2.
325 In the MWD versions A, 泛 (extensive) is 均 (extensive) and in the MWD versions B, it is 渹 (sound of wind or sound of water).
326 Here I would like to remind readers again that in the MWD 兮 is always 阿.
327 Here I would like to remind readers again that in the MWD 其 is interchangeable with 其.
328 See chapter 2, line 4 for a very similar line.
Constantly without desire\(^{329}\) [it] can [be] named small (or hard to see), [the] ten thousand things return [to it], yet [it] does not govern [them], [it] can [be] named the great.

MWD
則恆無欲也．可名於小，萬物歸焉，而弗為主，可\(^{330}\)名於大。

Line 4
以其終不自為大，故，能成其大。
[Because in the] end [it does] not [see it] self [as] great, therefore, [it] can become great.\(^{331}\)

MWD
是以，聖人之，能成大也，以其#不#為大也，故，能成#大。
So, the sage, [is] able to become great [because he does] not become great, therefore, [he is] able to become great.

Chapter 35 第三十五章

Line 1
執大象，天下往。
Hold [on to the] great image [and everything] underneath [the] sky [will] go [towards it].

MWD
執大象，天下往，

Line 2
往，而不害，安平大。
Going [towards it], yet [there is] no harm, [only] great safety [and] peacefulness.

MWD
往，而不害，安平\(^{332}\)大。

Line 3
樂與餌，過客止。
Music and cakes, passing guests [will] stop.

MWD
樂與餌，過客\(^{333}\)止。

Line 4
道之出口，淡乎\(^{334}\)，其無味，視之不足見，聽之不足聞，用之不足既。
[When the] Dà o exits, [it is] completely bland [and] it [is] tasteless, look [at it and there is] not enough [to] see [it], listen [to it and there is] not enough [to] hear [it], use [it and there is] not enough [to] finish [it].

MWD
故，道之出言也，曰淡呵，其#味也，視之不足見也，聽之不足聞也，用之不可既也。
Therefore, [when the] Dà o [comes] out [and is] spoken, [it is] called bland ah [and] it [is with no] taste, look [at it and there is] not enough [to] see [it], listen [to it and there is] not enough [to] hear [it], use [it and it] cannot be done with.

\(^{329}\) Here we find the exact same three words as in chapter 1, line 3.

\(^{330}\) In the MWD version B, míng (name) is míng 命 (life, fate, command).

\(^{331}\) In this chapter Lǎozǐ gives a description of the Dà o. Here once again we see the theme of non-contention and this concept of duality, where because you have “A,” only then can you have “B.”

\(^{332}\) In the Guōdiàn, píng (peacefulness) is píng 坪 (level ground).

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

\(^{334}\) “Completely,” has been added to emphasise the exclamation that comes with the character hū 乎.
Chapter 36 第三十六章

Line 1
將欲歙之，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。


MWD
將欲歙之，必固張之；將欲弱之，必固強之；將欲去之，必固與之；將欲奪之，必固與之。是謂微明。

Line 2
柔弱勝剛強。魚不可脫於淵，國之利器不可以示人。


MWD
柔弱勝強。魚不可脫於淵，國之利器不可以示人。

Chapter 37 第三十七章

Line 1
道常無為，而無不為，侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。

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

MWD
道常無為，而無不為，侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。

Line 2
化，而欲作，吾將鎮之以無名之樸。

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

MWD
化而欲作，吾將鎮之以無名之樸。

Line 3
無名之樸，夫亦，將無欲。

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

335 In the MWD version A, xī 起 (inhale) is shí 拾 (pick up ), in the MWD version B it is xī 略 (shut).
336 In the MWD versions A and B, gǔ 固 (firmly) is gǔ 古 (ancient, old , in the past).
337 In the MWD versions A and B, fèi 廢 (to abandon) is qù 去 (to go, but can be used in the sense of to get rid of).
338 In the MWD versions A and B, xíng 興 (to rise) is yǔ 與 (to give).
339 In the MWD versions A and B, yǔ 與 (to give) is yú 予 (to give).
340 As a direct translation, this line may be the most difficult to understand in the Dàodéjīng. It may also be the most difficult to interpret and given meaning. According to the theory of duality that is presented throughout the Dàodéjīng, this line may mean; be aware of your desires first, so that you are able to overcome them. For if you are not aware of them, how can you conquer them.
341 In the MWD version A, gēng 剛 (hard) is shèng 勝 (win) and in MWD version B it is zhèn 誅 (I the sovereign).
342 For a discussion on non-action, see appendix 1, pg. 164.
343 Some MWD versions omit 恒無.
344 In the MWD version B, zhèn 鎮 (subdue) is tiá 齡 (fill up or rumbling sound).
345 Lǎozǐ consistently talks about having no desire, in this line he discusses how exactly to do this. See appendix 1, pg. 167.
MWD
無名之樸，夫將不辱。
The nameless simplicity, now [there] will [be] no disgraces.

Line 4
不欲以靜，天下將自定。

MWD
不辱以靜，天地將自正。

Chapter 38 第三十八章

Line 1
上德不德，是以，有德，下德不失德，是以，無德。
Upper quiescence [is] not quiescence, so [there] is quiescence. Lower quiescence [is to] not lose quiescence, so [there] is no quiescence.

MWD
上德無為，而無以為，下德為之，而有以為。
Upper quiescence [has] no action, so nothing [has] action, lower quiescence acts, so [it] has action.

Line 2
上德為之，而無以為，上義為之，而有以為。
Upper benevolence acts, so nothing [has] action, upper righteousness acts, so [it] has action.

MWD
上仁為之，而無以為也，上義為之，而有以為也。

Line 3

MWD
上禮為之，而莫之應則攘臂，而扔之。
Upper rites [have] actions, so [when there is] no response, then [it will] roll up [its] sleeves and throw [its arms in the air].

346 Some MWD versions start this sentence with 間之以．
347 Some MWD versions omit the 無．
348 Just as in chapter 15, 28 and 32, in the MWD version A, pǔ 樸 (simple) is wò 帳 (tent or mosquito net). As mentioned previously, in some version of the MWD version A, 帳 is 葴．
349 In the MWD version A, jìng 靜 (still) is qíng 情 (emotion, sentiment, feeling), in the Guódiàn it is cǐ 指 (stab).
350 This chapter marks the beginning of the section on dé 德, which is commonly translated as “virtue” but in this paper is translated as “quiescence.”
351 This line can be confusing as a direct translation but is very important in understanding this idea of quiescence. It could be understood that those who live by non-action (naturalness, non-interference) have upper (the highest level of) quiescence, those with lower quiescence (the next step down) still live with some form of action, whether it be benevolence or righteousness.
352 As a direct translation, lines 1-4 can create some confusion. Lǎozǐ is ranking the levels of being a natural human or one in a natural state of being. From upper quiescence, to benevolence, righteousness and finally to etiquette or rites. Rites or rituals is seen as the lowest level because according to Lǎozǐ, if you do not follow the rites, people tend to get angry. Lines 1-2 can be confusing as well, it appears as though Lǎozǐ is saying that upper quiescence is quiescence that is just naturally there,
MWD
上禮為之，而莫之應也，則攘臂，而乃之。

Line 5
故，失道，而後德，失德，而後仁，失仁，而後義，失義，而後禮。

MWD
故，失道，而後德，失德，而後仁，失仁，而後義，失義，而後禮。

Line 6
夫，禮者，忠信之薄，而亂之首，前識者，道之華，而愚之始。
Now, [in regard to] rites, [there is a] fine [line between] loyalty, trustworthiness and the beginning of disorder. Foreknowledge [is] the Dào’s illustriousness [and the] start of foolishness.

MWD
夫，禮者，忠信之薄，而亂之首，前識者，道之華，而愚之始。

Line 7
是以，大丈夫，居其厚，而不居其薄，居其實，而不居其華。故，去彼取此。
So, now [a] great man, dwells in thickness [and does not reside] in thinness, [he] dwells in honesty [and does not reside] in illustriousness. Therefore, [he] leaves that [and] gets this.

MWD
是以，大丈夫，居其厚，而不居其薄，居其實，而不居其華。故，去彼取此。

Chapter 39 第三十九章

Line 1
昔之得一者，天得一以清，地得一以寧，神得一以靈，谷得一以盈，萬物得一以生，候王得一以為天下貞。
In the past [those that] had [the] one [were as follows]: [the] sky had [the] one, so [it was] clear, [the] earth had [the] one, so [it was] peaceful, [the] spirit had [the] one, so [it was] innately intelligent, [the] valley had [the] one, so [it was] full, [the] ten thousands things had [the] one, so they could produce [life], [the] feudal lords [and] kings had [the] one, so [they] could produce [life], [the] one, so [the] ten thousand things underneath [the] sky [were] loyal.

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

353 In the MWD version B, hòu 後 (behind, later, rear) jù 句 (which is kind of like a clause) in this sentence.
354 In the MWD versions A and B, bó 搏 (thin) is bó 浮 (it is an alternate form of 搏).
355 Here we come across the characters of thick or hòu 厚 and thin or bó 薄. Ancient Chinese tended to lack in vocabulary. This is sometimes quite apparent in the Dàodéjīng, where certain characters are used because of having no other better one. To deal with these characters in translation we can either translate directly or choose a word that fits into that character that would be close to the direct translation. For example, hòu could be translated as dūnhòu 厚 (genuineness.).
356 For bó 薄, which means “thin,” “flimsiness” could have been used. The character shí 實 actually means “full” but can also mean “honesty” or “sincere.”
357 In the MWD version A, this line reads 故，去彼取此. Their meanings are the same.
358 See chapter 12, line 6 and chapter 72, line 5 for the exact same words: therefore [he] leaves that, yet [he] gets this.
359 See n.68.
360 The character líng 靈 could be translated in English as “intelligence” but that does not quite explain the word well enough. Língxìng 靈性 means “intelligence” (especially of animals) and língmiào 靈妙 means “ingenious.” As Lǎozǐ’s teachings and chapters revolve around being natural, “innately intelligent” (as this in a kind of natural instinct) seems to be the appropriate translation. In MWD versions A and B, this character is líng 靈, it is an alternate form of líng.
昔之得一者，天得一以清，地得一以宁，神得一以霝，浴得一以盈，萬物得一以生，候王得一，而以為天下正。

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

故，貴以賤為本，高以下為基。因此，候王自稱孤，寡，不彀，此非以賤為本邪？非乎。

故，至數譽無譽。不欲琭琭如玉，珞珞如石。
Chapter 40 第四十章

Line 1
反者，道之動，弱者，道之用。
Returning [is] the movement [of the] Dà o, weakness [is what] the Dà o uses.

Chapter 41 第四十一章

Line 1
上士聞道，勤，而行之，中士聞道，若存若亡，下士聞道，大笑之。

MWD
反369者也，道之動370也。弱者，道之用。

Line 2
天下萬物生於有，有生於無。
[The] ten thousand things [that are] underneath [the] sky [are] born from having [but] having [is] born from emptiness.371

MWD
天下之物生於有，有#於無。

Chapter 41 第四十一章

Line 1
上士聞道，勤，而行之，中士聞道，若存若亡，下士聞道，大笑之。

MWD
上道，堇，而行之，中士聞道，若存若亡，下士聞道，大笑之。
弗笑，以為道。

Line 2
故，建言有之，明道若昧，進道若退，夷道若纇，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，大象無刑，道隱無名。
Therefore, [some] sayings are: [the] bright Dà o [is] like [it is] concealed; approaching [the] Dà o [is] like backing away; [the] level [and flat] Dà o [is] like [it is] knotted; upper quiescence [is] like [a] valley; [a] great brightness (to become known) [is] like [a] disgrace; extensive quiescence [is] like [it is] lacking; established quiescence [is] like [it is] stealthy; [the] unadorned [and] unaffected [seem] like [they are] changing (mixing); [a] big square [has] no corners; [a] big implement [is] late [in] completion; [a] big voice hardly [has any] sound; [the] big image [has] no form; [the] hidden Dà o [is] nameless.

369 In the Guòdiàn, 反 (reverse) is fān 返 (return).
370 In the Guòdiàn, 動 (move) is tóng 僅 (an alternate form of dòng).
371 This chapter follows on from the theme presented in chapter 11. Chapter 11, line 4 says: therefore, [in] having, so [lies] the benefit, [in] emptiness so [lies] the use. The difference here is that Lǎozǐ says, something has to come from nothing. This idea is also used in chapter 1, line 2: nameless, the start [of the] sky [and the] earth. [To] have [a] name, the mother [of] ten thousand things. It is also used in Chapter 4, line 5 says: I do not know whose child [it is], [its] form precedes God.
372 In the MWD version B, mò昧 (dark or gloomy) is fèi費 (spend, cost, expend).
373 In the MWD version B, ruò若 (as if, like) is rú 如 (as if, like).
374 See n.68.
375 These four characters pose difficulties in translating as a sentence. I have taken zhì質 to mean zhìpǔ质樸 (unadorned) and zhēn真 to mean chúnzhén純真 (unaffected), while yú渝 is taken to mean change.
376 In the Guòdiàn it is màn曼 (beautiful, vast, large and long).
377 In the Guòdiàn, yú隅 (corner or nook or remote place) is yú隅 (moat likely an alternate form of 隅).
378 In the MWD version B, xíng形 (shape) is xíng刑 (punishment).
Chapter 42

Line 1
道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物。
[The] Dào produces one, one produces two, two produces three and three produces the ten thousand things. 379

Line 2
萬物负负陰，而抱陽，沖氣以為和。
[The] ten thousand things carry yin on their back and hold yang in their arms, the mixing of energy is what makes the harmony. 380

Line 3
人之所惡，唯孤，寡，不毂，而王公以為稱。
[What] people so dislike; fatherless, widowed and unworthy, yet [this is what] the kings and dukes call themselves. 382

Line 4
故，物或損之，而益，或益之，而損。
Therefore, things are either decreased, so as to be increased or increased, so as to be decreased.

Line 5
人之所教，我亦教之，強梁者，不得其死，吾將以為教父。
[This] 1, 2, 3 follows the trinity model of the sky, earth and man. See 《太上老君中經．卷上》 Tàishàng Lǎo jūn Zhōngjīng. The sky is 1, the earth is 2 and man is 3. It also follows on from the idea within the Book of Changes where the 1 solid horizontal line splits into 2 horizontal lines, and then these, when combined in different variations make up the 3 lines of each of the eight trigrams. 379

This is the only place in the Dàodéjīng where the words yin and yang are specifically mentioned. 381

In some versions of the MWD 冲气 is omitted. 383

Here we see a kind of repetition of chapter 39, line 4: so, [the] feudal lords and kings call themselves, fatherless, widowed and unworthy, is [this] not [to take what] is lowly as [one's] root? 384

In the MWD version B, these 5 characters are 人之所惡。
[What] people so teach, I also teach, [the] tyrannical [do not have] a natural death, I will [take this] as [the] father [of all] teachings.

**MWD**

Therefore, people teach [in the] evening discussions [where] the people [are] taught, [that the] strong [and] straightforward [do not have] a natural death, I will [take this] as [the] father [of all] studies.

**Chapter 43 第四十三章**

**Line 1**

天下之至柔，驰騁天下之至384堅，無有入無間385。

When everything that is underneath the sky arrives [at being] soft, [horses will] gallop over [the] hardest underneath [the] sky, [the] intangible (or that without form) [can] enter into [that which has] no gap.386

**MWD**

天下之至柔，馳騁於387天下之致堅，無有入於無間。

**Line 2**

吾是以，知無為之有益。

So, I [therefore] know [that] non-action has benefit.

**MWD**

吾388是以，知無為益也。

**Line 3**

不言之教389，無為之益，天下希及之。

Teaching without words, the benefit [of] non-action, hardly [anything that is] underneath [the] sky [can] catch it.

**MWD**

不##教，無為之益，#下希能及之390。

**Chapter 44 第四十四章**

**Line 1**

名與身孰親。身與貨孰多。得與亡孰病。

[Your] name or body, which [is] dearer? [Your] body or your possessions, which [is] more [important]? [To] have or to lose, which is [the] disease?

**MWD**

名與身孰親391，身與貨孰多，得與亡孰病。

**Line 2**

是故，甚愛必大費，多藏必厚亡。

So therefore, deep love must [come at a] great cost [and] lots [of] hoarding must [have] ample losses.

---

384 In the MWD version A, zhì 至 (arrive or reach) is zhì 致 (send, extend, deliver).
385 In the MWD versions A and B, jiàn 間 (gap) is jiàn 間 (gap).
386 We know due to the next line that Lǎozǐ is just giving an example of the benefit of wúwéi. It seems that Lǎozǐ is saying as he says throughout the entire Dàodéjīng that by using wú wéi anything is achievable or can be done. In other words, this odd line is talking about the miraculous benefits of wúwéi.
387 In the MWD version B, wū 於 (alas) is hū 乎 (alas).
388 In the MWD versions A and B, wǔ 五 (five).
389 In chapter 2, line 3, we see a very similar line: teaches by doing [and] not speaking.
390 In the MWD version B, zhī 之 is yǐ 矣.
391 In the Guōdiàn, qīn 親 (relatives) is xīn 新 (new).
MWD

知足不辱, 知止不殆, 可以長久。

Chapter 45

Line 1

大成若缺, 其用不弊, 大盈若沖, 其用不窮。
Great accomplishment appears lacking, [in] its use [it does] no harm, great fullness appears empty, [in] its use [it] has no limit.

MWD

大成若缺, 其用不弊, 大盈若沖, 其用不窮。

Line 2

大直若屈, 大巧若拙, 大辯若訥。
Great straightness appears bent, great skill appears clumsy, great debating appears inarticulate.

MWD

大直若詘, 大巧若拙, 大辯若訥。

Line 3

躁勝寒, 靜勝熱, 清靜為天下正。
Irritability defeats [the] cold, stillness defeats heat, [to be] clear [and] still [is] the correct [way for all that is] underneath [the] sky.

MWD

趮勝寒, 靜勝炅, 清靚可以為天下正。
Hasty defeats [the] cold, quiet defeats daylight, clear quietness can make [everything that is] underneath [the] sky upright.

---

392 I generally try to translate dà 大 as “big” but sometimes “great” fits better. I try not to use “great” as tài 太 generally means “great.” I translate ruò 若 as “like,” as this is the most direct translation but sometimes “appear/s” is more appropriate.

393 In the MWD version A, qù 屈 (bent) is qù 蹅 (bend).

394 In the MWD version A, biàn 辯 (argue, dispute) is yíng 贏 (win).

395 In the MWD version A, nè 訥 (to speak slowly) is bìng 炳 (bright or luminous), in the MWD version B it is chú 屈 (inadequate, insufficient) and in the Guōdiàn it is qù 蹅 (bend).

396 In the MWD version B, zuò 拙 (clumsy, awkward, dull) is jué 挖 (dig or excavate) and in the Guōdiàn it is, qù 蹅 (bend).

397 In the MWD versions A and B, zào 躁 (irritable) is zào 蹣 (hasty).

398 In the MWD version A, these three characters read jìngshèngjǐng 靂勝炅 (quiet defeats daylight).

399 In the MWD version B, shèng 勝 is zhèn 胄 (I the sovereign). 

400 In the Guōdiàn this last lines reads 清清為天下定 (clear [and] clear[er] makes [everything] under [the] sky stable).
Chapter 46 第四十六章

Line 1
天下有道，卻走馬以粪，天下無道，戎馬生於郊。①
[When everything that is] underneath [the] sky has Dà o, galloping horses (fine horses) go back to [being used for their] dung, [when everything that is] underneath [the] sky [does] not [have the] Dà o, war horses [give] birth [in the] outskirts [of the city].

MWD
天下有道，卻走馬以粪，天下無道，戎馬生於郊。

Line 2
罪莫大於欲②，禍莫大於不知足③，咎莫大於欲得。
[There is] no greater crime then desire, [there is] no greater disaster then not knowing [what is] enough [and there is] no greater mistake then having desire.④

MWD
罪莫大於欲，禍⑤，咎⑥，於欲得。

Line 3
故，知足之足，常足矣。
Therefore, know [when] enough [is] enough, [this is to] constantly [have] enough.

MWD
#，常足矣。

Chapter 47 第四十七章

Line 1
不出户，知天下，不窺牖，見天道。
Without going out [the] door, know [everything that is] underneath [the] sky, without peeping out [the] window [you can] see [the] sky’s Dà o.

MWD
不出於戶，以知天下，不窺於牖，以知天道。

Line 2
其出彌遠，其知彌少。
[The] further [one] goes, [the] less [one] knows.

① In this sentence two types of horses are mentioned. The first is zǒu mǎ 走馬 or galloping horses which could also be translated as “fine horses.” The second is róng mǎ 戎馬, the róng 戎 comes from xī róng 西戎, as it was this area that commonly provided horses to China (Ramsden, 2021, p. 37).
② These five characters are omitted in many versions of the Dàodéjīng within China.
③ Here once again we find a word that seems to be used due to a lack of vocabulary, zú 足 normally means “enough,” “ample,” “sufficient” or “full.” Lǎozǐ uses this form of zú in numerous places such as; chapter 44, line 3 and chapter 28 line 3. In the context of this sentence, Lǎozǐ may be referring to the zú 足 of mǎn zú 滿足 or contentment.
④ In the Guōdiàn, dà 大 is also dà 大 but in the MWD versions A, it is càn 憂 (miserable, or tragic).
⑤ In the Guōdiàn is to have no desires. He mentions this idea of no desires in; chapter 1, line 3; chapter 3, line 5; chapter 34, line 3; chapter 37, line 3 and chapter 57, line 3. The opposite to having desires is contentment and Lǎozǐ recommends to deal with the problem of desires through simplicity (in living), see chapter 37, line 3.
⑥ In the Guōdiàn, huò 禍 (misfortune, disaster) is jiù 傷 (fault, blame or bad fortune).
⑦ In the MWD version A, kuī 窺 (peep) is guī (plan, or scheme) and in the MWD version B it is kuī 窺 (glimpse).
⑧ In the MWD versions A and B, jiàn 見 (sec) is zhī 知 (know).
⑨ The modern equivalent to mí 蜜 is yuè 越.
Line 3
以，聖人不行，而知，不見，而名，不為，而成。
So, [the] sage [does] not do, yet [he] knows, [does] not see, yet [he can] name [things], [he does] not do, yet [he] accomplishes.\textsuperscript{410}

Chapter 48 第四十八章

Line 1
為學日益，為道日損，損之又損，以至於無。
[For] study daily increase, [for] Dào daily decrease, decrease [and] decrease until arriving at non-action, non-action, so nothing [is] not done.\textsuperscript{413}

Chapter 49 第四十九章

Line 1
聖人無常心，以百姓心為心。
[The] sage [does] not [have a] constant heart, [he takes the] heart [of the] hundred surnames to be [his own] heart.\textsuperscript{417}

410 This type of yin yang sentence style is common throughout the Dàodéjīng. One such example is: chapter 39, line 5: therefore, [to have] lots [of] praise [is to have] no praise.
411 In the Guōdiàn, wú is wáng．
412 See chapter 37, line 1, for the exact same words: non-action, so nothing [is] not done.
413 For a discussion on the concept of return, see appendix 1, pg. 166.
414 In the Guōdiàn, yún (say or speak) is sǔn (decrease).
415 In some MWD version B, 无 is sometimes 無.
416 The character shì 事 can also mean “matters” or “business,” so a direct translation of wúshì 無事 could also be “no business,” and yǒushì 有事 could be “to have business.” In the context of this sentence and the Dàodéjīng as a whole, shì could also be taken to mean “interfere.”
417 In ancient Chinese the words for heart and mind are interchangeable.
418 In the MWD version B, xìng 姓 (surnames) is xǐng 省 (inspect or examine, it can also be used in xǐngqīn 省親, which means “to visits one’s parents”).
善者，善之，不善者，亦善也。

Trustful [people], I trust, untrustworthy [people], I also trust, [this is the] quiescence [of] trustfulness.

聖人在天下，歙歙為天下渾其心，百姓皆注其耳目聖人皆孩之。

[The] sage [is] underneath [the] sky (in the world of men), [he] breathes in, [so as to] mix his heart [with everything that is] underneath [the] sky. [The] hundred surnames all pay attention [to] their ears and eyes, [and because of this, they are] all [like the] sage’s children.

聖人在天下也，歙歙焉為天下渾心，百姓皆注其耳目，聖人皆孩之。

第五十章

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。

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

夫，何故也。以其生生之厚。

Now, why is this? [Because to seek the] life (survival) [of] life [is too] excessive.

蓋聞善攝生者，陸行不遇兕虎，入軍不被甲兵。

The characters xīxī mean “to breath in.” It seems though that Lǎozǐ is using this as a metaphor for restraint.

The character hún as a standalone character normally means “to mix” or “muddy.” It could also be taken to come from húnpǔ, which means simple and natural.

In the MWD version A, zhǔ 屬 (to fix ones attention on) is added.

See n.196.

This line talks about how people are caught up only in their senses, whereby they do not act naturally (causing much trouble). The sage sees and treats them like children.

In the MWD versions A and B, zhí 执 (to hold or grasp) is added.

In the MWD version B, líng 陵 (hill or mound) is yòu 又.

In the MWD version B, bì 避 (avoid) is tóng 僅 (an alternate form of dòng) - move (to move).

Here we see the character shēng 生 doubled up. I have taken the first shēng to derive from qiushēng 求生, which means “to seek survival” and the second shēng to mean “life.”

MWD
蓋聞善執生者，陵行不辟兕虎，入軍不被甲兵。

Line 4
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。

[For these people], female rhinoceros’ [do] not [have a place to] throw (stick) their horns, tigers [do] not [have a place to] use their claws [and] soldiers [do] not [have a place to] stab their swords. Now, why is this? Because [they have] no place of death.

MWD
革兕無所投亓角，虎無所昔亓蚤，兵無所容亓刃。何故也。以其亓無死地。

Chapter 51 第五十一章

Line 1
道生之，德畜之，物形之，勢成之。 [The] Dà o produces, quiescence raises, things [have] form [and] circumstances complete.

MWD
道生之，而德畜之，物刑之，而器成之。

Line 2

MWD
是以，萬物尊道，而貴德。

Line 3

MWD
道之尊也，德之貴也，夫，莫之爵也，而恆自然也。

Line 4
故，道生之，德畜之，長之，育之，亭也，毒之，養之，覆之。 Therefore, [the] Dà o [produces] life, quiescence raises, grows, nurtures, shelters, toughens, nourishes [and]

it may mean a kind of bovine-like animal/s and secondly, it may mean a female rhinoceros.

In the MWD version A, (manage, arrange, handle) cuò 措 is xī 前 (former time or in the past).

In the MWD versions A and B, zhǎo 爪 (claw) is zǎo 蚤 (flea).

In the MWD versions A and B, xíng 形 (shape) is xíng 刑 (punishment).

The character shì 勢 can mean “strength” but in this case seems to mean “circumstances.” In the MWD versions A and B, it is qì 器 (an implement).

In the MWD versions A and B, ming 命 (life, fate or command) is jué 爵 (rank or title).

In the MWD version A, rán 然 is jì 祭.

The character tíng 亭 means “erect,” which makes no sense in this sentence till it changed to mean “shelter.”

This character dù 毒 means “toxins” but can be changed to “toughen,” another example of a lack of vocabulary.

This character fù 覆 means “to cover” but in the context of this sentence, “protect” makes more sense. In the MWD version B, this character is fù 復 (return).

“Raise,”” as into raise children.
protects.

**MWD**

# 造生之，畜之，長之，遂遂遂遂之，亭之，毒之，養之，復之，

**Line 5**

生而，不有，為，而不恃，長，而不宰，是謂玄德，

Produce, yet not [to] have, [to] act, yet not depend [on], [to] grow, yet not [to] slaughter. [This] is called profound quiescence.

**MWD**

##，弗有也，為，而弗恃也，長，而弗宰也，此是胃玄德。

**Chapter 52 第五十二章**

**Line 1**

天下有始，以為天下母。

[Everything that is] underneath [the] sky has [a] beginning [and this beginning] is [the] mother [of everything that is] underneath [the] sky.443

**MWD**

天下有始，以為天下母。

**Line 2**

既得其母，以知其子，既知其子，復守其母，没身不殆。

Having known the mother is [to] know [the] child, [having] known the child [is to] again abide [by] its mother, [to abide by the mother till the] end [and the] body [has] no danger.445

**MWD**

既得其母，以知其子，既知其子，復守其母，没身不殆。

**Line 3**

塞其兑，閉其門，終身不勤。

Block the holes (apertures) [and] close the doors, [so in the] end [the] body [is] not exhausted. Opening the holes, assisting [with] affairs [and in the] end [the] body [can]not [be] rescued.

**MWD**

塞其悶，閉其門，終身不勤。

---

442 In the MWD version A, yù 育 (give birth or raise) is sui 遂 (satisfy or fulfil).
443 See chapter 1, line 2 for a similar line.
444 The characters jídé 既得 can be translated as “having vested in.”
445 This could be translated indirectly as “to have no dangers till the end of your life.”
446 In the MWD versions A, duì 兌 (hole or exchanges) is mèn 悶 (bored, depressed, stuffy) and in the Guōdiàn, it is mén 門 (entrance or door).
447 See chapter 56, line 2 for the same six characters: block [the] holes [and] close the doors.
448 See n.73.
449 In MWD version B, jì 救 (rescue) is jí 薔 (brambles or thorns).
450 In the MWD version B, ji 齊 (be level with, even or identical).
451 See chapter 56, line 2 for the same six characters: block [the] holes (apertures), close the doors. In the MWD version A, men 門 is men 悶.
452 See chapter 56, line 2 for the same six characters: block [the] holes [and] close the doors. In the MWD version B, and the Guōdiàn, zhōng 終 (end) is dōnɡ 冬 (this can mean “winter,” or is an alternate from of dōnɡ 汀 which means “bang” or “thud.”
Line 4
見小曰明，守柔曰強。
Seeing [the] small [is] called bright, abiding [by the] soft is called strong.

MWD
見小曰明，守柔曰強。

Line 5
用其光，復歸其明，無遺身殃，是為習常。
Use the light [and] again return [to] the bright, [do not bequeath] [your] body [to] calamities, this is [called] practising [the] constant.

MWD
用光，復歸明，毋遺身殃，是習常。

Chapter 53 第五十三章

Line 1
使我介然有知，行於大道，唯施是畏。
[If] I [were to] make [use of a] little [bit of] knowledge [that I] have, [it would be] to walk [with the] great Dào [and] only fear [going] astray.

MWD
使我介潔有知也，行於大道，唯施是畏。

Line 2
大逹甚夷，而人好徑。

MWD
大逹甚夷，民甚解好徑。

Line 3
朝甚除，田甚蕪，倉甚虛，服文綵，带利劍，壓飲食，財貨有餘是謂盜夸。
[The] royal court [is] completely wiped out, [the] fields [are] completely over grown with weeds, [the] granaries [are] completely empty, wearing embroidered colours (fancy clothes), carrying sharp swords, sated [with] food [and] drink, [to have a] surplus [of wealth [and] possessions, [this] is called [the] boasting [of a] thief. [This is] not [the] Dào!

MWD
朝甚除，田甚蕪，倉甚虛，服文彩，帶利劍，壓飲食，而貨財貨****盜也，非也。

454 The character róu 柔 (soft) is commonly used throughout the Dàodéjīng see appendix 1, pg. 165 for further details.
455 In the MWD version A, xí 習 (practise) is xí 襲 (attack or inherit).
456 In the MWD version A, guì 貴 (value) is Dào 道.
457 In the MWD versions A and B, yāng 殃 (calamity or disaster) is yāng 央 (beg or entreat).
458 The character shǐ 使 has many meaning in Chinese but in this case it seems to mean “to use” or “to employ.”
459 The character rán 然 is used as a conjunction in this sentence, any translation is omitted. The character rán can have many meanings but can commonly be translated as “so.” I commonly omit any translation. In the MWD version A, this character is jié 潔 (clean).
460 The character shèn 謙 means “very” or “extremely,” shèn is translated here as “completely.”
461 In the MWD versions A and B, cǎi 彩 (bright colour) is cǎi 采 (colour).
Chapter 54 第五十四章

Line 1
善建者，不拔462．善抱者，不脫464．子孫以祭祀不輟465。

MWD
善建者，不拔，善抱，子孫以祭祀不輟。

Line 2
修之於身，其德乃真，修之於家，其德乃餘，修之於鄉，其德乃長，修之於國，其德乃豐467，修之於天下，其德乃普468。

MWD
脩之#身，亓德乃真471，脩之#家，亓德乃餘，脩之#鄉，亓德乃長，脩之#國，亓德乃豐，脩之#天下，亓德乃博。

Line 3
故，以身觀身，以家觀家，以鄉觀鄉，以國觀國，以天下觀天下。

MWD
#，以身観身，以家観家，以鄉観鄉，以國観國，以天下観天下。

Line 4
吾何以知天下然哉。以此。

MWD
吾何#知天下之然茲，以此。

---

462 In the MWD version A, bá (pull out) is bō 撥 (to move or adjust with the hand).
463 In the Guódiàn, bào (to hold or carry in the arms) is bǎo 保 (protect, defend or keep).
464 In the Guódiàn, tuō (to shed or come off) is duì 兌 (to exchange or convert).
465 In the MWD version B, chuò 輟 (stop or cease) is jué 绝 (cut short, extinct of vanish).
466 In the MWD version B, xīu 修 (repair or cultivate) is xīu 脩 (repair of mend) and in the Guódiàn it is yōu 椰 (distant ).
467 In the MWD version B, fēng 豐 (rich, abundant, plentiful) is féng 凳 (to meet or to butt; as in horned animals).
468 In the MWD version B, zhé 瑦 (general or universal) is bó 博 (rich, abundant, plentiful or ample).
469 Many times throughout the Dàodéjīng, the body is used in a way that it is referring to the self.
470 In the Guódiàn, qí 亓 (his, her, its, their) is qí 则 (his, her, its, their).
471 In the Guódiàn, zhēn 真 (true or real) is zhēn 贞 (loyal or faithful).
472 In MWD version A and the Guódiàn, guó 国 (state) is bāng 廠 (state).
473 This sentence implies a type of self-governing or self-organisation.
474 In this chapter Lǎozǐ gives a method for keeping a state in order, which begins from the bottom up, and starts with a good foundation (on an individual level).
475 In the Guódiàn zhī 知 (to know) is zhì 智 (wisdom).
Chapter 55

Line 1
含德之厚，比於赤子。

MWD
含德之厚者，比於赤子。

Line 2
蜂蠆不螫，猛獸不據，攫鳥不搏。
Wasps, scorpions [and] snakes [will] not sting [or bite them], fierce animals [will] not seize [them and] birds of prey [will] not strike [them].

MWD
蜂蠆蛇弗螫，攫鳥猛獸弗搏。

Line 3
骨弱筋柔，而握固。
[Their] bones [are] weak, [their] tendons [are] soft but [their] grasp [is] firm.

MWD
骨弱筋柔，而握固。

Line 4
未知牝牡之合，而全作，精之至也。

MWD
未知牝牡之會，而朘怒，精之至也。

Line 5
终日号，而不嗄，和之至也。知和曰常，知常曰明，益生曰祥，心使气曰强。
Crying [the] whole day, yet [he dos] not [get a] hoarse voice, [the] most (peak) harmony. [To] know [this]

For a better understanding this could be indirectly translated as, “he who fully embodies quiescence is like a new born infant.”

In the MWD versions A and B, chà i (a general name for venomous snakes, scorpions etc or a variety of scorpion) is lì癘 (pestilence or plague).

In the MWD version B, huǐ虺 (a kind of poisonous snake) is chóng虫 (insect).

In the MWD version A, fēng蜂 (honey bee) is féng逢 (meet or come upon).

In the MWD version A, shé蛇 (snake) is dì地 (earth or land or soil) and in the Guōdiàn it is, tā它 (it).

In the MWD version B, shì螫 (sting) is hè赫 (to be frightened).

In the MWD version B, jué攫 (seize or grab) is jù据 (occupy or seize).

In the MWD version B, bó搏 (seize or fight) is bǔ捕 (catch, seize or arrest) and in the Guōdiàn it is kòu扣 (to arrest or to confiscate).

In the MWD version B, ruò弱 (weak) is jīn筋 (tendon).

In the MWD version B, jīn筋 (tendon) is ruò弱 (weak).

In the MWD version B, hé合 (join) is huì會 (meeting).

In the MWD versions A and B, quǎn全 (complete or intact) is zuǐ腹 (penis) is quán.

The character jīng精 commonly means “essence” but can also mean “sperm.”

Classically nù怒 (anger) can mean “to rouse oneself.”

In the MWD versions A and B, shà嗄 (hoarse voice) is yōu嚘 (this character is mostly likely an archaic version of shà).
harmony [is] called [the] constant. [To] know [the] constant [is] called bright\textsuperscript{491}, [to] increase life\textsuperscript{492} [is] called auspicious. [when the] heart uses energy,\textsuperscript{493} [this is] called strength.

MWD
終\textsuperscript{494}日号，而不順，和之至也。#和曰常，知常\textsuperscript{495}曰明，益生曰祥，心使气曰强。

Line 6
物壮則老謂之不道，不道早\textsuperscript{496}已，[When] things [are] robust [they] are old\textsuperscript{497}, [this is] not called [the] Dà o, [with] no Dà o [there is an] early end (death).

MWD
物\textsuperscript{498}老謂之不道，不道蚤已，

Chapter 56 第五十六章

Line 1
知者，不言，言者，不知。

MWD
知者，弗言，言者，弗知。

Line 2
塞其兑，闭其门，挫其锐，解其纷，和其光，同其尘，是谓玄同。
Block the holes (apertures), close the doors, blunt the sharp, untie the tangled, harmonise the bright, [be the] same [as] dust, [this] is called [to be the] same [as the] profound.\textsuperscript{501}

MWD
塞亓兌，閉亓門，和亓光，同亓塵，銼亓兌，而解亓紛，是胃玄同。

Line 3
故，不可得，而親，不可得，而疏，不可得，而利，不可得，而害，不可得，而貴，不可得，而賤。
Therefore, [with this person, one] cannot have either closeness, [one] cannot have either distance, [one] cannot have either benefit, [one] cannot have either harm, [one] cannot have either value [and one] cannot have either humiliation.

\textsuperscript{491} See chapter 16, line 2, for a similar line: [a] return [to] life [is] called [the] constant, [to the] know [the] constant [is] called brightness.
\textsuperscript{492} To increase life most probably means to interfere with life.
\textsuperscript{493} The heart uses qi most likely refers to the use of desires or aspirations.
\textsuperscript{494} In the MWD version B and the Guòdiàn, zhōng （end）is dōng 冬 (this can mean “winter,” or is an alternate from of dōng 咚 which means “bang” or “thud”).
\textsuperscript{495} In the MWD version A chá ng （constant）is hé 和 (harmony).
\textsuperscript{496} In the MWD version B, zǎo 早 (early) is zǎo 蚤 (nowadays this means, “flea,” but in this context clearly means early).
\textsuperscript{497} Here we see the theme of knowing when to stop and no excesses once again.
\textsuperscript{498} In the MWD version A, zé 则 (grammar word) is jí 即 (namely).
\textsuperscript{499} See chapter 52, line 3, for the same six characters.
\textsuperscript{500} Chapter 4, line 3 says: [it] subdues the sharp, unties the entangles, harmonises the bright [and is the] same [as] the dust.
\textsuperscript{501} The line with this theme is repeated in chapter 77, line 2: the sky’s Dào [is to] reduce [what] has surplus and [to] supplement [that which is] deficient. This tells us that everytime we see the character xú 玄 or profound we can also take this as another name for the Dào.
\textsuperscript{502} In the MWD version A, duì 侖 (exchange) is mèn 嘩 (bored or depressed but probably means “door” here).
\textsuperscript{503} In the MWD version A, these three characters are: zuò 坐 (sit) qǐ 兀 (it) yuè 閱 (read, go over or pursue).
MWD
故，不可得，而親也，亦不可得，而疏，不可得，而利，亦不可得，而害，不可得，而貴，亦不可得，而賤。

Line 4
故，為天下貴。
Therefore, in [everything that is] underneath [the] sky [this person] is valued.

MWD
故，為天下貴。

Chapter 57 第五十七章

Line 1
以正治國，以奇用兵，以無事取天下。

MWD
以正之國，以蹤用兵，以無事取天下。

Line 2
吾何以知其然哉。以此，天下多忌諱，而民彌貧，民多利器，國家滋昏，人多伎巧，奇物滋起，法令滋彰，盜賊多有。
How [do] I know this [is] so? [It is] because [of] this: [when everything that is] underneath [the] sky [has] lots [of] taboos (prohibitions), [the] poorer [the] people, [when the] people [have] lots [of] sharp implements, [the] state [and] royal house [are] increasingly [in] darkness, [when the] people [are] very crafty, strange things increasingly arise, [when the] command [of] laws [are] increasingly clever (rigid), [the] more bandits [and] thieves [there will be].

MWD
吾何以知其然也哉，以此，夫，天下多忌諱，而民彌貧，民多利器，而邦家滋昏，人多伎巧，奇物滋起，法令滋彰，盜賊多有。

504 In the Guódiàn gù (therefore) is gù 古 (ancient; in this case it is an alternate form of gù). This character is used this way throughout the Guódiàn.
505 In the Guódiàn, ér (and, yet) is tiān 天 (sky).
506 In the MWD version A, jià 賤 (cheap) is qiǎn 深 (shallow).
507 The character qí 奇 could either mean qí guài 奇怪 (strange or odd) or qíqiǎo 奇巧 (ingenious). As Lǎozǐ does not like the use of armies or soldiers I have chosen this to mean “strange.” For Lǎozǐ’s dislike of soldiers, see Chapter 30, line 1: [when the Dà o assists [the] ruler [of men, soldiers [will] not use force [on all that is] underneath [the] sky. These affairs [are] easy [at] coming back. Chapter 31, line 2: a man of noble character, [his] residence will value [the] left, [one who] uses soldiers will value [the] right. Chapter 69, line 1: [in] using soldiers [there are the following] sayings: “I dare not [be] the host, only the guest, [I] dare not advance [an] inch, only retreat [a] foot.”
508 See n.180.
509 In the MWD versions A and B, qí 奇 (strange) is jī 皆 (lopsided or unbalanced).
510 The Guódiàn, wú 無 (no or not) is wang 無 (to die or flee, in this case it means no or not) and in the MWD version A, it is qí 皆 (it, his, her, their, it also seems to have the meaning of no in the MWD).
511 The characters yǐcǐ 以此 are always translated as: [it is] because [of] this.
512 See chapter 19, line 3: terminate skilfulness (cunning) [and] abandon profit, [then there will be] no bandits [and] thieves.
513 In the MWD version B, zǐ 增 (exclamation) is cái 才 (emphasizes the preceding word).
514 In the MWD versions A and B, qí 奇 (strange) is jī 皆 (lopsided or unbalanced).
515 The characters yǐcǐ 以此 are not used in the MWD versions.
516 In the MWD version A, zǐ 增 (grow or increase) is cí 茲 (now, in this case is an alternative form of zǐ).
Line 3

Therefore, the sage says: “I [have] non-action, so [the] people [them] selves transform, I [am] very still, so [the] people [them] selves [are] upright, I [do] not [have any] business, so [the] people [them] selves [are] natural, I [have] no desire, so [the] people [are them] selves simple.”

Chapter 58 第五十八章

Line 1

[When] the government [is] depressed (not interfering), its people [are] pure [and] honest, [when] the government [is] inquiring [about everything], its people [are] lacking.

Line 2


Line 3

[When there] is no uprightness, uprightness [once] again is strange [and the] good [once] again are evil.

Line 4

In spoken Chinese when the character for “good,” 好 is added in a sentence like, 我好累 (I good tired), it means, I [am] very tired.

516 Classical Chinese uses two versions of “I” in writing. “I” as in referring to the self: 吾 吾 and “I” as it is used in this line, as a general statement: 我 I.

517 In spoken Chinese when the character for “good,” 好 is added in a sentence like, 我好累 (I good tired), it means, I [am] very tired.

518 See chapter 37, line 1, for a similar line: [the] constant Dà o [is] non-action, so nothing [is] not done. [If] feudal lords [and] kings [are] able to abide [by it, then] ten thousand things will [them] selves transform.

519 The character shì 事 can be translated as, “affairs,” “matters,” or “business.” In the context of Lǎozǐ though when the character wú 無 is added in front of shì, it probably means “no interference.”

520 In the Guōdiàn, wúwéi 無為 (non-action) is wú shì 無事 (no affairs) and in the MWD versions A and B, it is qí wéi 丌為 (non-action). The character for qí 一般 means “his,” “her,” “it,” or “theirs.” In this case it must mean “no.” Some versions of the MWD do not use qí and instead use wú.

521 In this case tún or zhūn 屯 is taken as a variant of chún 純 (simple).

522 The character fú 福 can have several meanings: “luck,” “happiness” or “good fortune.” “Happiness” seems to be the best fit in this line.

523 In the MWD version B, mí 迷 (confused) is xī 惦 (in all cases or to know).

524 The character lián 兼 is an old Chinese word used for the side wall of a Chinese house but can also mean “honest”. In MWD version B, it is jiān 兼 (double, twice or simultaneous).
[The] confusion of the people, these days are undoubtedly long. So, the sage is square but not cutting, angular but does not cut, straight but not unrestrained, bright but not dazzling.

Chapter 59 第五十九章

Line 1
治人事天，莫若啬。
[In] governing the people and dealing with the sky, there is nothing like being thrifty.

MWD
治人事天，莫若啬。

Line 2
夫唯，啬是谓早服，早服谓之，重積德，重積德則無不克，無不克則莫知其極，莫知其極，可以有國，有國之母，可以長久。
Now, only thrifty is called early preparation, early preparation [is] called heavily accumulated quiescence. [To have] heavily accumulated quiescence [and there] is nothing [a person] can not overcome. [Having] nothing [that can]not be overcome [and there] is no known limit [to this person], [Having] no known limit [and this person] can have (rule) [the] state. Having the mother [of the] state [and one] can long endure.

MWD
夫唯，啬是以蚤服，#服是胃重積#，莫#亓，可以有國，有國之母，可#長久。

Line 3
是謂根深固柢，長生久視之道。
So, [this is] called deep roots [and a] firm base, [which is] the Dào’s [way to] live long [and to] see [the world a] long time.

MWD
是胃根深固氏，長生久視之道也。

Chapter 60 第六十章

Line 1
治大國，若烹小鮮，以道莅天下，其鬼不神。
Governing a large state is like cooking a small fish, use the Dàodéjīng to administrate everything that is.

525 In the MWD version B, 亅（stab or cut）is 亅（thorn, splinter or to stab）.
526 In the MWD version B, 亅（act recklessly or unrestrained）is 亅（to tie or to bind）.
527 In the MWD version B, 亅（brilliant or glorious）is 亅（look into the distance from a height）.
528 Here once again is another line of the same theme of knowing when enough is enough, zhīzhǐ or having no excess. This theme is repeated again and again throughout the Dàodéjīng.

529 Chapter 44, line 3, Lǎozǐ also gives another method to “long endure”: know [what is] sufficient [in order to have] no disgrace, know [when to] stop [in order to have] no danger, [only then one] can long endure. These last few words are commonly translated as: “the way to long life and enduring (or lasting) vision.” I have chosen not to go with such as translation as it seems one needs to be very careful in taking modern ideas, philosophies and mindsets, and assuming this is the way someone thought 2300 years ago. The ancient human mindset is commonly completely different to the modern one.

530 In the MWD versions A and B, 亅（bottom or base）is 亅（family or clan）.
531 In the MWD version A, 亅（root）is 亅（hibiscus syriacus）.
532 In some versions of MWD B, the end of this line reads: 亅莫知其#，莫知其#有國，有國之母，可#久.
533 In the MWD version A and B, 亅（bottom or base）is 亅（family or clan）.
534 In the MWD version A and B, 亅（bottom or base）is 亅（family or clan）.
535 In the MWD version A, 亅（arrive, be present）is 亅（to stand）.
underneath [the] sky, [then] ghosts [do] not [have a] spirit.

**MWD**
治大國,若亨小鮮,以道立天下,亓鬼不神。

**Line 2**
非其鬼不神,其神不傷人。
[It is] not [that] these ghosts [do not really have] no spirit, it [is that their] spirit [can]not harm people.

**MWD**
非亓鬼不神也,亓神不傷人也。

**Line 3**
非其神不傷人,聖人亦不傷人。
[It is] not [that] these spirits [do] not harm people, [it is that the] sage also [does] not harm people.

**MWD**
非亓神不傷人也,聖人亦弗傷人也。

**Line 4**
夫,两不相傷,故,德交536歸焉。
Now [because these] two [do] not mutually harm [the people], therefore, quiescence converges [and makes a] return.

**MWD**
夫,两不相傷,故,德交歸焉。

**Chapter 61 第六十一章**

**Line 1**
大國者,下流,天下之交,天下之牝。
[A] large state [is] downstream [where all the rivers] under [the] sky converge [and is the] female [of] [everything that is] underneath [the] sky. 537

**MWD**
大國538者也,下流,天下之交539也,天下之牝也。

**Line 2**
牝常以静540勝牡,以静為下。
[A] female constantly can [with] stillness defeat [the] male, [this is because] stillness is below.

**MWD**
牝恆以静勝牡,為亓靜也,故,宜為下也。

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536 In regard to the character jiāo 交, the general meaning of jiāo could be understood as; when two things intersect, converge or mix. One use of the word in spoken Chinese is; [to] make friends 交朋友. In this case the translation of jiāo could also be “make.” This line could be understood as, “when the sage and ghosts do not harm the people, the people can go back to natural living.”


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

539 In the MWD version A, jiāo 交 (mix or connect) is jiāo 郊 (suburbs or outskirts).

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

541 In MWD version A, jìng 靜 (stillness) is jìng 靈 (alternate form of jìng).
Line 3
故，大國以下小國則取小國，小邦以下大國則取大國。故，或下以取，或下，而取。
Therefore, [a] large state can lie below [a] small state, thereby taking [the] small state, [a] small state can [lie] below [a] big state, thereby taking [the] big state. Therefore, either [by] low [lying a state] can take [over] or [by] low [lying a state] then takes.

MWD
故，大國以下小國則取小國，小國以下大國則取大國。故，或下以取，或下，而取。

Line 4
大國不過欲兼畜人，小國不過欲入事人。

MWD
故，大國不過欲兼畜人，小國不過欲入事人。

Line 5
夫，兩者，各得所欲，大者，宜為下。
Now, [the] two each get [what they] so desire, [the] big [state] appropriately, is below.

MWD
夫，皆得其所則大者，宜為下。

Chapter 62 第六十二章

Line 1
道者，萬物之奧[544]，善人之寶[545]，不善人之所保。
[The] Dà o [is the] abstruse [mystery of] ten thousand things, [it is the] good person’s treasure [and is what] preserves [the] not good person.

MWD
道者，萬物之注也，善人之保也，不善人之所保也。

Line 2
美言可以市，尊行可以加人。
Beautiful words can [be] traded, respectful conduct can increase [a] person.

MWD
美言可以市，尊行可以加人。

Line 3
人之不善，何弃之有。故，立天子，置三公，雖有拱璧以先騂馬，不如坐進此道。
The people [that are] not good, why have [them] abandoned? Therefore, [when] establishing [the] son [of the] sky [and putting in] place [the] three minsters, although [a] large flat round ornament of jade with a hole at the

542 The character xù 蓄 means to raise or rear. Interestingly it is used specifically with livestock, as in to raise or rear livestock and therefore, could be translated as “herd.” It is unclear here if Lǎozǐ is using this as a negative.
543 In the MWD version B, jiān 兼 (double, simultaneously or twice) is bìng 並 (side by side or simultaneously).
544 In the MWD versions A and B, à o 奥 (profound, difficult to understand) is zhù 注 (pour in to or fill).
545 In the MWD versions A and B, bǎo 宝 (treasure) is bǎo 保 (protect).
546 In the MWD version B, bǎo 保 (protect) is bǎo 葆 (preserve).
547 In the MWD version B, jiā 加 (add) is hè 賀 (to send a present).
548 In the MWD versions A and B, gòng 供 (surround) is gòng 共 (common or in general).
549 In the MWD versions A and B, sì 駟 (a team of four horses) is sì 四 (4).
550 In the MWD version A, rú 如 (as if or such as) is shān 善 (good) and the MWD version B it is rúo 若 (as if or like).
centre [is] given before [the] four chariot horses, [it is] not like sitting [down and] moving towards (or kneeling down and presenting) the Dà o.

**MWD** 人之不善也，何弃之有，故，立天子，置三公。雖有共璧以先四馬，不若坐而進此#

**Line 4** 古之所以貴此道者，何，不曰，以求得，有罪以免邪，故，為天下貴。
[Why did] the ancients so value this Dà o? [One does] not say [they did it to] seek gain, [they did it to be] exempt [of] fault. Therefore, [they] are valued [by all that are] underneath [the] sky.

**MWD** 古之所以貴此道者，何，不曰，以求得，有罪以免邪，故，為天下貴。

**Chapter 63 第六十三章**

**Line 1** 為無為，事無事，味無味，大小多少，報怨以德。
Actions [have] no actions, affairs [have] no affairs, tastes [have] no tastes. Big [as] small, [a] lot [as a] little. Repay resentment with quiescence. 553

**MWD** 為無為，事無事，味無味，大小多少，報怨以德。

**Line 2** 圖難於其易，為大於其細，天下難事，必作於易，天下大事，必作於細。
Plan [the] difficult [while] it is easy, do big [things while] they are small. Underneath [the] sky (in the world) difficult affairs must [be] done [when they] are easy, underneath [the] sky great affairs must [be] done [when they] are small.

**MWD** 圖難乎，#元細也，天下之難，#作於易，天下之大，#作於細。

**Line 3** 是以，聖人終不為大，故，能成其大。
So, [in the] end [the] sage never does [anything] great, therefore, [the sage is] able [to] accomplish greatness.

**MWD** 是以，聖人終不為大，故，能#

**Line 4** 夫，輕諾必寡信，多易必多難，是以，聖人猶難之，故，終無難矣。
Now, light promises must [have] little trust, [what is] especially easy must [be] especially difficult. So, [the] sage [takes things] like [they are] difficult, therefore [in the] end, nothing [is] difficult!

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551 In MWD version A, gōng 公 (high ranking official) is qīng 卿 (high ranking official) and in the MWD version B it is xiāng 鄉 (which normally means countryside but cannot have that meaning in this instance). 552 In the MWD version A, xié 邪 (grammar word) is yú 與 (a carriage) and in the MWD version B it is yǔ 與 (to give or offer). 553 “Repay resentment with quiescence” seems to be out of place here and may belong to chapter 79, line 1. 554 In the Guódiàn, wú 無 is wáng 亡. 555 In the Guódiàn and MWD versions A, wèi 味 (taste) is wèi 未 (not). 556 In the MWD version A, zhōng 終 (end) is dōng 冬 (this can mean “winter” or is an alternate from of dōng 咚 which means “bang” or “thud”). 557 In the MWD version B, nuò 諾 (yes) is ruò 若 (as if, like). 558 In the Guódiàn and the MWD version A, yóu 猶 (just as or like) is yóu 猶 (plan or scheme).
Chapter 64 第六十四章

Line 1
其安易持，其未兆易謀，其脆易泮，其微易散。
[What] is quiet [is] easy to maintain, [what] has not [yet] come out [is] easy to plan, [what] is fragile easily falls apart, [what] is faint [is] easily scattered.

MWD
亓安也易持也。###易謀。###。###。

Line 2
為之於未有，治之於未亂。
Act [when there] is nothing [to get], manage [when things] are not [yet a] mess.

MWD
#####。#####。###。

Line 3
合抱之木，生於毫末，九層之台，起於累土，千里之行，始於足下。

MWD
###木，作於毫末，九成之台，作於欙土，百千之高，始於足下。

Line 4
為者，敗之，執者，失之。
[To] act [is to] fail, [to] hold [is to] lose.

MWD
為之者，敗之，執者，失之。

Line 5
是以，聖人無為，故，無敗，無執，故，無失。
So, [the] sage [uses] non-action, therefore, nothing fails, [the sage does] not hold [on], therefore, nothing loses.

MWD
是以。人為也。#。#敗。#執也。故。#失也。

Line 6
民之從事，常於機成，而敗之，慎終如始則無敗事。
The people [in] dealing [with] affairs constantly [have] many accomplishments, yet [they still] lose. [Be] cautious [at the] end like [it was the] start [and then] there will be no loss [in] affairs.

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559 In the MWD versions A and B and the Guōdiàn, céng 層 (storey or floor) is chéng 成 (accomplish).
560 In the MWD versions A and B, qǐ 起 (get up) is zuò 作 (rise or grow).
561 In the MWD version A, lèi 累 (tired) is léi 疲 (fatigued) and in the MWD version B it is léi 檐 (sedan).
562 In the MWD versions A and B, qiān 千 (1000) is bǎi 百 (100).
563 In the MWD versions A, li 里 (miles) is rén 仁 (benevolent) and in the MWD version B it is qiān 千 (1000).
564 In the MWD versions A and B, xíng 行 (walk) is gāo 高 (high).
565 In the MWD version A, shǐ 始 (start) is tái 台 (platform).
566 In the MWD versions A and B, rú 如 (as if, like) is ruò 若 (as if, like) and in the Guōdiàn it is nú 女 (female).
民之從事也，恆於成事，而敗之。故曰：慎終567若始則無敗事矣。

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。

是以，聖人欲不欲，不貴難得之貨，學不學，而復眾人之所過，能輔萬物之自然，而弗敢為。

第六十五章

古之善為道者，非以明民，將以愚之。

故曰568，為道者，非以明民也，將以愚之也。

民之難治，以其智多。

故，以智治國，國之賊，不以智治國，國之福。

知此两者，亦稽式。

知此两者，亦稽572式。

恆知此两者，亦稽式也。
常知稽式，是謂玄德。  
Constantly knowing, [the] postponed pattern (model) is called profound quiescence.  

玄德深矣，遠矣，與物反矣，然後乃至大順。  

江海所以能為百谷王者，以其善下之，故，能為百谷王。  
Rivers [and] oceans [are] able [to be] the kings [of a] hundred (all) valleys because [they are] good [at being] below [them]. Therefore, [they are] able [to be] the kings [of a] hundred (all) valleys.  

是以，聖人之欲上民也，必以言下之，元欲先民也，必以身後之。  
So, [if one] desires [to be] above [the] people, [your] words must [be] below [them], [if one] desires [to be] before (lead) [the] people, [your] body [must be] behind [them].  

是以，聖人處上，而民不重，處前，而民不害。  
So, [the] sage’s place [is] above, yet [the] people [are] not weighed [down by him], [his] place [is] in front, yet [the] people [are] not harmed.  

573 We can find this idea of profound quiescence mentioned in the same context in another two chapters; chapter 10, line 7: produced [and] raised. Produce, yet not [to] have, [to] act, yet not depend [on], [to] grow, yet not [to] slaughter. [This] is called profound quiescence; chapter 51, line 5: produce, yet not [to] have, [to] act yet, not depend [on], [to] grow, yet not [to] slaughter. [This] is called profound quiescence. This idea of profound quiescence is clearly the idea of non-interference.  
574 In the MWD version A, shì (is) is cǐ (this).  
575 The character shù 順 means “to put in order.”  
576 In the MWD versions A and B and the Guódiàn, 谷 is yù (to bathe in the sun or wind).  
577 To understand this line better, it could be translated as: so, if one desires to rule the people, your words must be modest, if one desires to lead the people, you should put yourself second.  
578 In the Guódiàn, yù (desire) is cái 才 (ability, talent, capable).  
579 In the Guódiàn, hòu 後 (back, behind) is xià 下 (below).  
580 In the MWD versions A and B, chǔ 處 (reside or dwell) is jū 居 (residence) and in the Guódiàn it is cái 才 (ability or talent or used as grammar word).  
581 In the Guódiàn, zhòng 重 (heavy) is hòu 厚 (thick) and in the MWD version A it is hài 害 (harm).  
582 In the MWD version A, shàng 上 (up) is qián 前 (in front).
Line 4
是以，天下樂推，而不厭。
So, [everything that is] underneath [the] sky [is] happily pushing [him forward.] yet without tiring.

MWD
##，天下皆樂誰，而弗猒也。

Line 5
以其不爭，故，天下莫能與之爭。
[This] is [because the] sage [does] not contend, therefore, in [everything that is] underneath [the] sky, nothing can contend [with] him.

MWD
不以元無爭與。故，天下莫能與#爭。

Chapter 67 第六十七章

Line 1
天下皆謂我道大，似不肖。
Everything [that is] underneath [the] sky calls my Dà o great [but it] seems like [it is] not.

MWD
天下胃我大，大而不宵。
[Everything] underneath [the] sky calls me great, great yet [I am] not dark.

Line 2
夫唯，大故，似不肖。
Now, only [because it is] great, therefore, [it seems] like [it is] not worthy.

MWD
夫唯，不宵，故，能大。
Now, only because [I am] not dark, therefore, [I am] great.

Line 3
若宵，久矣，其細也。
[If it was] like [being] worthy, [it would have] long [ago become] minute (trivial).

MWD
若宵，久矣，亓細也。

Line 4
夫，我有三寶，持而保之，一曰慈，二曰檢，三曰不敢為天下先。

583 In the MWD version A, tuī 推 (push) is sǔn 雀 (falcon or eagle), in the MWD version B it is shéi 誰 (who) and in the Guōdiàn it is, jìn 進 (advance).
584 See n.616.
585 In the MWD version A, bù 不 (no) is fē 非 (not).
586 In the MWD version A, zhēng 爭 (contend) is zhè ng 諍 (criticize or expostulate) and in the Guōdiàn, it is jìng 靜 (stillness).
587 In the MWD version B, sì 似 (similar or like) is ér 而 (yet).
588 In the MWD version B, xiǎo 宵 (resemble) is xiāo 霄 (night, evening or dark). This is the same throughout the chapter.
589 Some MWD version B omits 大.
590 In the MWD version B, bǎo 寶 (treasure) is bǎo 保 (protect) and in the MWD version A it is bǎo 貽 (preserve or nurture).
591 In the MWD version B, chí 持 (hold) is shì 市 (market).
592 In MWD versions A and B, cí 慈 (kind or loving) is cí 茲 (now). This is the same in line 5.
Now, I have three treasures [that I] hold and protect: first [is] called parental affection, second [is] called frugality [and the] third [is] called daring not to be [at the] front [of everything that is] underneath [the] sky.

**MWD**

夫，我恆有三寶，市，而保之，一曰茲，二曰檢，三曰不敢為天下先夫。

**Line 5**

慈，故，能勇，檢，故，能廣，不敢為天下先，故，能成器長。

Parental affection, therefore able [to be] brave [and] frugal. therefore able [to be] expansive [and] not daring [to be at the] front [of everything that is] underneath [the] sky, therefore able [to] completely grow [into a] vessel.

**MWD**

茲，故，能勇，檢，故，能廣，不敢為天下先，故，能成器長。

**Line 6**

今舍慈且勇，舍檢且廣，舍後且先死矣。

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

**MWD**

今舍茲且勇，舍亓椈且廣，舍後且先則必死矣。

**Line 7**

夫，慈，以戰則勝，以守則固。

Now, [because of] parental affection, so [in war] there is victory, so [in military] defence there is resoluteness.

**MWD**

夫，茲，以單則勝，以守則固。

**Line 8**

天將救之，以慈衛之。

[When the] sky wants [to] save, it guards [with] parental affection.

**MWD**

天將救之，如以茲垣之。

### Chapter 68 第六十八章

**Line 1**

善為士者，不武，善戰者，不怒，善勝敵者，不與，善用人者，為之下。


**MWD**

故，善為士者，不武，善戰，不怒，善勝敵者，弗與，善用人者，為之下。

---

593 In the MWD version A, qi 器 (implement) is shì 事 (matter or affair).
594 This “now” is different to the “now” of fū 夫, this “now” jīn 今 is the “now” of time; as in right “now.”
595 See n.600.
596 See n.322.
597 In the MWD versions A and B, wèi 衛 (protect) is yuán 報 (wall).
598 In the MWD versions A and B, jiù 救 (rescue) is jiàn 建 (build, set up or construct).
599 In the MWD version A, rú 如 (as if, like) is added, in the Guódiàn it is nǚ 女 (female, but in this case is clearly an alternative form of rú).
600 In the MWD version B, zhàn 戰 (fight) is dān 單 (single or solitary).
601 See n.322.
是謂不爭之德，是謂用人之力，是謂配天古之極。

[This] is called [the] quiescence of non-contention, [it] is [also] called using [the] strength [of] people [and it] is [also] called the utmost (pinnacle) [of] joining [the] sky [of] old.

Chapter 69 第六十九章

Line 1 用兵有言，吾不敢為主，而為客，不敢進寸，而退尺。

[In] using soldiers [there are the following] sayings: “I dare not [be] the host, only the guest; [I] dare not advance [an] inch, only retreat [a] foot.”

Line 2 是謂行無行，攘無臂，扔無敵，執無兵。

[This] is called moving without moving, [to] roll up one’s sleeves up without [showing one’s] arms, [to] throw (attack) without [an] enemy [and to] hold without [a] weapon.

Line 3 禍莫大於輕敵，輕敵機喪吾寶。

[There is] no greater calamity than [to make] light [of your] enemy, [making] light [of your] enemy [and from] many losses my treasure [is lost].

Line 4 故，抗兵相加，哀者，勝矣。

Therefore, fighting armies [that are] mutually together (engaged) [in combat], [it is the] grieving [one which will] defeat [the other]!

---

602 In the MWD version B, pèi 配 (join) is féi 肥 (fat or plump).
603 In the MWD version A, zhèng 爭 (contend) is zhèng 諍 (admonish).
604 See n.100.
605 In the MWD version A, dí 敵 (enemy) is shì 適 (be fit, be suitable, be proper, in this case it should be an alternative form dí).
606 In the MWD version A, jìn 近 (near) is jīn 斤 (axe, shrewd, unit of measure).
607 In MWD version A, bǎo 保 (protect or defend) is bǎo 藥 (preserve or nurture).
608 In the MWD version A, kàng 抗 (resist, combat, fight) is chēng 擊 (call, name, say).
609 In the MWD version A, āi 哀 (mourn, lament or grieve) is yī 依 (depend on, rely on).
610 See n.322.
Chapter 70 七十第章

Line 1
吾言甚易知，甚易行。
My words [are] very easy [to] know [and] very easy [to] walk (practise).

MWD
吾言甚易知也，甚易行也。

Line 2
天下莫能知，莫能行。
[But] no [one] underneath [the] sky [is] able [to] know (understand) [them and] no [one can] walk (practise) [them].

MWD
而天下之莫能知也，而莫之能行也。

Line 3
言有宗，事有君。
Words have [their] ancestor, 611 affairs have [their] monarch.

MWD
天，言又宗，事有君。

Line 4
夫唯，无知，是以，不我知。
Now, only [because they do] not know (understand), so [they do] not know (understand) me.

MWD
夫唯，无知也，是以，不我知。

Line 5
知我者，希则我者，貴。
[Those who] know (understand) me [are] few, thus I [am] valuable.

MWD
知者，希則我者貴矣。

Line 6
是以，聖人被褐，懷玉。
So, [the] sage wears coarse [clothes and] carries jade [in his] bosom (heart or chest).

MWD
是以，聖人被褐，而懷612玉。

Chapter 71 第七十一章

Line 1
知不知，上，不知，知，病。
Knowing [that you do] not know [is] superior, not knowing [you do not] know [is a] sickness.

MWD
知不知，尚矣，不知，知，病矣。

611 Ancestor is one translation, another is “principle aim” or “purpose.”

612 In the MWD versions A and B, huá 襤 (bosom or mind) is huái 襤 (to carry in the bosom)
Knowing [that you do] not know; esteemed! Not knowing [you do] not know; sickness!

**Line 2**
夫唯，病病，是以，不病。
Now, only [by being] sick [of] sickness, so [will there be] no sickness.

**MWD**
#
#
#
#

**Line 3**
聖人不病，以其病病，是以，不病。
[The] sage [is] not sick because he [is] sick [of] sickness, so [therefore, he is] not sick.  

**MWD**
是以，聖人之不病也，以病病也，是以，不病。

**Chapter 72 第七十二章**

**Line 1**
民不畏威則大威至。
[When the] people [do] not fear power, then great power arrives.

**MWD**
民不畏則大威將至矣。
[When the] people [do] not fear, then great fear will arrive!

**Line 2**
無狎其所居，無厭其所生。

**MWD**
毋閘亓所居，毋猒亓所生。

**Line 3**
夫唯，不厭，是以，不厭。
Now only [because there is], no dislike, so [there is] no rejection.

**MWD**
夫唯，弗厭，是以，不厭。

**Line 4**
是以，聖人自知不自見，自愛不自貴。
So, [the] sage knows himself [but does] not see himself, [he] loves himself [but does] not value himself.

**MWD**
是以，聖人自知而不自見也，自愛而不自貴也。

**Line 5**
故，去彼取此。

---

613 It is interesting to note here how critical Lǎozǐ was of thinking you know something when you do not. He was so critical of it, he spoke of it as a disease.

614 In the MWD version A, wú xiá (not familiar) is mǔzhá (the meaning is unclear in the context of the sentence and maybe incorrectly recorded by the original scribe). In the MWD version B it is mǔxiá (not narrow).

615 In the MWD versions A and B, wú yà n (no dislike, sick, rejection) is mǔyàn (not eat one’s fill).

616 In the MWD versions A and B and throughout this chapter yà n (dislike, sick, rejection) is yà n (eat one’s fill).
Therefore, [he] leaves that [and] gets this. 617

MWD  故，去罷，而取此618。

Chapter 73 第七十三章

Line 1 勇於敢則殺，勇於不敢則活619。  
Courageous at daring, thus death (one is killed), courageous at not daring, thus life (one lives).

MWD  勇於敢者則殺，勇於不敢則栝。

Line 2 此两者，或利或害。  
These two, either [have] benefit or harm.

MWD  #两者，或利或害，

Line 3 天之所惡，孰知其故。是以，聖人猶難之。  

MWD  天之所亞，孰知亓故。###。

Line 4 天之道，不爭，而善勝，不言，而善應，不召，而自來，繦然，而善謀。  

MWD  天之道，不單，而善朕，不言，而善應，不召，而自來，弾然，而善謀。

Line 5 天網恢恢，疏，而不失。  

MWD  天網恢恢，疏，而不失。

---

617 The same five characters are found in chapter 12, line 6 and chapter 38, line 7.
618 In the MWD version A, these last six characters are: 故，去被取此。
619 In the MWD version B, hú o (life) is guā (a measuring frame).
620 In the MWD version B, è 恶 (ugly) is yà 亚 (inferior).
621 Even the sage finds it difficult to understand nature’s ways.
622 In the MWD version A, zhēng 爭 (contend of strive) is dān 単 (single, individual, only).
623 See n.322.
624 In the MWD version A, chǎn 绦 (relaxed or indulgent) is 弹 and is most likely pronounced dān. In the MWD version B, it is dān 単. These characters do not make sense in their modern translation but may mean to “shoot.” As in shoot a pellet.
625 In the MWD version B, gāng 網 (head rope of a finishing net or guiding principle) is wǎng 网 (this is an old variant of 網 and means “net”).
626 If you were to throw or scatter marbles on the grass, certain areas would not have marbles; the sky is not like this, it is everywhere and does not neglect anything.
Chapter 74 第七十四章

Line 1
民不畏死，奈何以死懼之。

MWD
若民恥且不畏死，奈何以殺懼之也。

Line 2
若使民常畏死，而為奇者，吾得執，而殺之，孰敢。
If [you] make [the] people constantly fear death, yet [one] does strange (devious) [things], I will grab [them] and kill [them], [then] who [will] dare [to be strange].

MWD
若使民恆且畏死則而為奇者，吾將得#而殺之，夫，孰敢矣。

Line 3
常有司殺者，殺。
[To] constantly have [an] executioner [is to have] killing.

MWD
若民恆且必畏死則恆有司殺者。
If [the] people constantly must fear death, then [there will] constantly be [an] executioner.

Line 4
夫，代司殺者，殺，是謂代大匠斲。
Now, [to] replace [the] executioner’s killing is called replacing [him with the] master craftsman’s chop.

MWD
夫，代司殺者，殺，是#代大匠斲也。

Line 5
夫，代大匠斲者，希有不傷其手矣。
Now, [to] replace [the] master craftsman’s chop, [only a] few [will] have [their hands] not damaged (cut).

MWD
夫，代大匠斲者，則希不傷其手矣。

Chapter 75 第七十五章

Line 1
民之飢，以其上食稅之多，是以，飢。
[The] people [are] hungry because [their] superiors (leaders) take [too] many taxes, so [they are] hungry.

---

627 In the MWD versions A and B, sǐ 死 (death) is shà 殺 (to kill).
628 In the MWD version A, nài (how) is ruò 若 (like).
629 In the MWD version B, qí 奇 (strange) is jī 異 (lopsided or unbalanced).
630 This character is omitted in some versions, but I have included it, as nearly all copies have it. It does seem as though the original Wáng Bi version did not include it.
631 In the MWD version A, dàì 代 (replace) is fá 伐 (to cut down). This is the same throughout the chapter.
632 In the MWD versions A and B, míng 民 (people) is rén 人 (people).
633 In the MWD versions A and B, shàng 上 (upper) is qǔ 取 (to get).
634 Lǎozǐ uses the characters shíshuì 食稅 (eat tax). I have changed this “eat” to “take.”
MWD
人之飢也，以亓取食税之多也，是以，飢。

Line 2
民之難治，以其上之有為，是以，難治。
People [are] hard [to] manage because their superiors (leaders) have action, so [they are] difficult [to] manage.

MWD
百姓之不治也，以亓上之有以為，是以，不治。
The hundred surnames [are] not manageable Because their superiors (leaders) have action, so [they are] not manageable.

Line 3
民之輕死，以其求生之厚，是以，輕死。
[When] people [take] death lightly, [this is] because they [are] richly seeking life, so [the people take] death lightly.

MWD
民之輕死也，以亓求生之厚也，是以，輕死。

Line 4
夫唯，無以生為者，是賢於貴生。
Now, only [one who has] nothing to do [in] life is worthy at valuing life. 638

MWD
夫唯，無以生為者，是賢於貴生。

Chapter 76 第七十六章

Line 1
人之生也，柔弱，其死也，堅強。

MWD
人之生也，柔弱，亓死也，堅強。

Line 2
萬物草木之生也，柔脆，其死也，枯槁。

MWD
萬物草木之生也，柔脆，亓死也，枯槁。

Line 3
故，堅強者，死之徒，柔弱642者，生之徒。

635 In the MWD version B, xìng 姓 (surname) is shēng 生 (produce).
636 In the MWD version A, qīng 轻 (light) is jīng 津 (flowing water or underground stream).
637 In the MWD version A, qīng 轻 (light) is jīng 津 (flowing water or underground stream).
638 In this chapter, it seems as though Lǎozǐ is talking about rulers that interfere too much in the governing of people and are too ambitious. These two combined characteristics together only hurt the people.
639 The idea of softness is a common reoccurring theme within the Dàodéjīng and is mentioned many times. See appendix 1, pg. 165.
640 In the MWD version A, xìn 信 (trust) is rèn 刃. This is an alternative form for many characters; 刃 (rèn, “blade; sword; knife”); 利 (rèn, “to fill; full”); 誠 / 信 (rèn, “to recognize”); 忍 (rèn, “to endure”); 耐 / 耐 (rèn, “strong, tough”).
641 In the MWD version A, jiān 堅 (strong, solid, firm) is xián 賢 (worthy, virtuous or able).

**MWD**

故，曰堅强者，死之徒也，柔弱微細，生之徒也。

**Line 4**

是以，兵強則不勝，木強則共。

So, [a] strong army will not win [and] strong wood will break.

**MWD**

#以，兵强则不胜，木强则恒。

**Line 5**

强大处下，柔弱处上，

[The] strong [and] great [have their place] below, [while the] soft [and] weak [have their place] above.

**MWD**

强大居下，柔弱微細居上。

**Chapter 77 第七十七章**

**Line 1**

天之道，其猶張弓與。高者，抑下，下者，舉之，有餘者，損之，不足者，補之。

The sky's Dào, [is] it [not] like drawing a bow? Up [is] pressed down, down [is] lifted [up], [to] have [a] surplus [is to be] reduced, [to have] deficiency [is to be] supplemented.

**MWD**

天之道，其猶張弓與。高者，抑下，下者，舉之，有餘者，損之，不足者，補之。

**Line 2**

天之道，損有餘，而補不足。

The sky's Dào [is to] reduce [what] has surplus and [to] supplement [that which is] deficient.

**MWD**

天之道，其猶張弓與。高者，抑下，下者，舉之，有餘者，損之，不足者，補之。

**Line 3**

人之道則不然，損不足以奉有餘。

The Dào [of] man is not so, [it] reduces [what is] deficient [and] offers [to that which] has surplus.

**MWD**

人之道其猶張弓與。高者，抑下，下者，舉之，有餘者，損之，不足者，補之。

**Line 4**

孰能有餘以奉天下，唯有道者。

In the MWD version A, wēixì 微細 (small and tiny) is added. This is the same in line 5.

In the MWD version B, shèng 勝 (win) is 恆 (I the sovereign).

In the MWD version A, gōng 共 (together) is 恆 恒 (constant), in the MWD version B, it is jīng 慎 (cautious). This character has a number of different characters used for it depending on the book. They can include: shé 折 (break) and bīng 兵 (soldier). To “break” makes the most sense in the context of the line.

In the MWD versions A and B, yì 抑 (press down) is 印 (seal or engrave).

In the MWD version B, 有餘者，损之 reads 有余，者云之。

In the MWD version B, bǔ 補 (tonify or supplement) is yì 益 (increase).

In the MWD version B, sǔn 损 (decrease) is yún 言 (speak or say). This is the same throughout the chapter.

In the MWD version B, yǒuyú 有余 is yòuyú 有余. This is the same in line 4.
Those who are able [to] have surplus [and give] offerings [to everything that is] underneath [the] sky, only [they] have [the] Dào.

MWD

夫,孰能有餘,而有以取奉於天者乎,唯又道者乎。

Line 5

是以,聖人為,而不恃,功成,而不處,其不欲見賢。


MWD

是以,聖人為,而弗又,成功,而弗居也,若此亓不欲見賢也。

Chapter 78 第七十八章

Line 1

天下莫柔弱於水,而攻堅強者,莫之能勝,以其無以易之。

[In all that is] underneath [the] sky nothing [is] softer [and] weaker than water, yet [in] attacking [the] hard [and] strong, nothing can defeat [it], [this is] because its emptiness is changeable.

MWD

天下莫柔弱於水, ##堅強者,莫之能#也,以亓無以易之也。

Line 2

弱之勝強,柔之勝剛,天下莫不知,莫能行。


MWD

水之朕剛也,弱之朕##強也,天下莫弗不知也,而##行也。

Line 3

是以,聖人雲,受國之垢,是謂社稷主,受國不祥,是為天下王。

So, [the] sage says: “[to] receive, the flth [of the] state is called [the] governing alter for the gods of earth and grain. [To] recieve [the] bad luck [of the] state is [the] king [of everything that is] underneath [the] sky.”

MWD

是故,聖人之言云,曰:受國##之詬,是胃社稷之主,受國##之不祥,是胃天下之王。

Line 4

正言若反。

Upright (true) words seem [to be in] reverse.

MWD

正言若反，
Chapter 79 第七十九章

Line 1
和大怨，必有餘怨。安可以為善。
In harmonising great resentment, [their] must have [some] surplus resentment [left over], how can [this] be good?

MWD
和658大怨，必有餘怨，焉可以為善。

Line 2
是以，聖人執左契659，而不責於人。

MWD
是以，聖人執左契，而不責於人。

Line 3
有德司契，無德司徹661。

MWD
故，有662德司契，無德司徹。

Line 4
天道無親，常與善人。
[The] sky’s Dao [has] no relatives (preferential treatment), [and is] constantly with good people.

MWD
天，天道無親，恆與善人。

Chapter 80 第八十章

Line 1
小國寡民，使有什伯之器，而不用，使民重死，而不遠徙。

MWD
小國寡民，使有百人之器，而不勿664用，使民重死，而#遠徙。

Line 2
雖有舟舆，無所乘之。雖有甲兵，無所陳之。使人復結繩，而用之。
Although [they] have boats [and] carts, [there is] no [place to] ride [them]. Although [they] have armour [and] weapons [there is] no [place to] display [them]. Make [the] people again tie knots and use [them] (to keep records).

658 In the MWD version B, hé 和 (harmony) is hé 禾 (grain or seedling).
659 In the MWD version A, qì 契 (contract) is jiè 芥 (shell) and in the MWD version B it is jiè 芥 (tiny things). This is the same in line 3.
660 The left contract most likely refers to the debtor’s contract.
661 The character chè 徹 as a word itself means “penetrating.”
662 In the MWD version B, yǒu 有 (have) is yòu 又 (also).
663 In the MWD version A, guó 國 (state) is bāng 邦 (state). This is the same in line 3.
664 In the MWD version B, wú 毋 (no) is wù 勿 (do not)
MWD
有車周，無所乘之。有甲兵，無所陳之，使人復結繩，而用之。

Line 3
甘其食，美其服，安其居，樂其俗，鄰國相望，雞犬之聲相聞，民至老死不相往來。

MWD
日亓食，美亓服，##，樂亓俗，安亓居，鄰國相望，雞犬之聲相聞，民至老死不相往來。

Chapter 81 第八十一章

Line 1
信言不美，美言不信。
Truthworthy words [are] not beautiful, beautiful words [are] not trustworthy.

MWD
信言不美，美言不信。

Line 2
善者，不辯，辯者，不善。
Good [does] not distinguish, distinguishing [is] not good.

MWD (see line 3)
知者，不博，博者，不知。
Knowing [is] not extensive, extensiveness [is] not knowing.

MWD
善者，不多，多者，不善。
Good [is to have] no excess, [having] excess [is] not good.

Line 4
聖人不積，既以為人，己愈有，既以與人，己愈多。
[The] sage [does] not accumulate. [He] acts [for] the people, [so the] more he [will] have. [He] gives [to the] people, [so the even] more [abundant] he [will be].

MWD
聖人無積，既以為人，己愈有，既以予人，己愈多。

Line 5
天之道利，而不害。
The sky's Dào benefits [all] and [does] not harm [any].

MWD
故，天之道利，而不害。

---

\(^{665}\) "Without visiting each other."

\(^{666}\) In the MWD version A, quán 犬 (dog) is gǒu 狗 (dog).

\(^{667}\) The character bó 博 means “extensive,” Lǎozǐ is most likely referring to someone who has extensive knowledge.

\(^{668}\) In this line, in the MWD version B, yù 愈 (more) is yú 俞 (consent or approve).

\(^{669}\) In the MWD version B, yǔ 與 (to give) is yú 予 (to give).
Line 6
聖人之道為，而不爭。

MWD
#人之道為，而弗爭。

4. Conclusion
In conclusion it could be summarised that Lǎozǐ’s Dào is the profound, mysterious and abstruse aspect within emptiness that has produced everything we see. Lǎozǐ described this concept as emptiness in action. Lǎozǐ uses feminine similes such as, the valley spirit, the profound female and the mother to represent it. Lǎozǐ said people should aim to return to the Dào, which meant a return to the peaceful, still, content and quiet state of (original) being. The techniques used to do this were simplicity (in living), non-contention, knowing when enough is enough (or no excesses), to be humble and frugal, to have no (or little) desires and aspirations, to be like water, to use the concept of softness and to take nature’s way as a guiding principle on how to live. From these core ideas Lǎozǐ developed the five quiescences: quiescence of the profound, quiescence of emptiness, upper quiescence, quiescence of non-contention and quiescence of nature.

As the Dàodéjīng may have been a text primarily for rulers, it does appear that Lǎozǐ’s cornerstone philosophy for ruling was based on the idea of letting things take their natural course and to not interfere too much. He called this idea, the profound quiescence. Lǎozǐ uses the sage as an exemplar for rulers to model themselves on and primarily describes them as men who do not interfere, do not contend, do not use their wisdom, do not accumulate possessions, do not go extremes, puts themselves behind the people, are modest and just let the people live naturally, whereby they benefit a hundred-fold and love their ruler.

For a final summary of Lǎozǐ’s philosophy the following model is proposed:

![Diagram of the Classic of Dao and Quiescence](image)

Figure 1. Proposed model for Lǎozǐ’s philosophy

In the figure above, we can see the trinity that makes up Lǎozǐ’s Dào and its core teachings which adhere to the sky, earth, man model. We can also see the 5 core quiescences that were presented in the Dàodéjīng.

References

670 See 《太上老君中經.卷上》 Tàishàng Lǎojūn Zhōngjīng for the trinity model. The sky is 1, the earth is 2 and man is 3.
Appendix 1: The Dàodéjīng’s Core Concepts

Within the Dàodéjīng, there appear to be 13 core concepts:

1. Dào 道
2. Quiescence 德
3. Non-action 無為
4. Stillness 靜
5. Valley, female, mother 谷，雌，母
6. Softness 柔弱
7. Nature 自然
8. Return 歸
9. Emptiness 無
10. Simplicity 樸
11. The constant 常/恆
12. No desire 無欲
13. The sage 聖人

These 13 concepts are discussed below but it is important to keep in mind that they all seem to be different
angles that point to one core theme, which in this case is the Dào.

**Dào 道**

In trying to understand what the Dào is, we need to analyse Lǎozǐ’s own descriptions. Firstly, we can see it as being described as something similar to emptiness:

1. Chapter 4, line 1: [the] Dào is [like an] empty utensil, yet [in] use [it is] not filled.

Secondly, it is something that cannot be described with language:

1. Chapter 1, line 1: [the] Dào [that] can [be the] Dào, [is] not [the] constant Dào.
2. Chapter 25, line 2: I [do] not know its name, the word [I use to] call [it is] Dào.
3. Chapter 32, line 1: [the] constant Dào [has the] nameless simplicity.

Thirdly, it is something that cannot be seen, we just kind of know it is there.

1. Chapter 21, line 2: [if] Dào is [a] thing, [it is] only indistinct [and] only dim.
2. Chapter 35, line 4: [when the] Dào exits, [it is] completely bland [and] it [is] tasteless, look [at it and there is] not enough [to] see [it], listen [to it and there is] not enough [to] hear [it], use [it and there is] not enough [to] finish [it].

Fourthly, it is very similar to nature:

1. Chapter 25, line 5: Dào patterns (models) [it-self on] nature.

Fifthly, it made everything and came before anything:

1. Chapter 42, line 1: [the] Dào produces one, one produces two, two produces three [and] three produces [the] ten thousand things.
2. Chapter 14, line 7: [to be] able [to] know [the] ancient beginnings is called [the] chronicles [of] Dào.
3. Chapter 25, line 1: [there was some] thing mixed becoming, [it was] before [the] sky [and] produced [the] earth, still ah, silent ah, standing alone, [with] no change, moving cyclically, yet without danger (end), [it] can be [the] mother [of all that is] underneath [the] sky.

Sixthly, the Dào is hidden, without form and is nameless:

1. Chapter 41, line 2: [the] big image [has] no form, [the] hidden Dào [is] nameless.
2. Chapter 1, line 2: nameless, the start [of the] sky [and the] earth.

From reviewing the above lines, it seems as though Lǎozǐ may be describing the Dào as something similar to emptiness. The key difference though is that Lǎozǐ does not see emptiness as empty. Lǎozǐ’s emptiness has something, profound, mysterious and abstruse to it:

1. Chapter 1, line 5: profound [and] even more profound, the gate [to] all [the] mysteries.

Lǎozǐ’s Dào may be the profound, mysterious and abstruse something within emptiness that has produced and maintained both the earth and the sky and everything in-between. It seems that according to Lǎozǐ, emptiness is not intrinsically empty, as it can do anything as it produced everything we see.

**Quiescence 復**

Lǎozǐ spoke of what may be called the minor quiescences; chapter 38, line 1: lower quiescence; chapter 41, line 2: extensive quiescence and established quiescence; chapter 49, line 2: quiescence of goodness; chapter 49, line 3: quiescence of trustfulness and chapter 59, line 2: heavily accumulated quiescence. Lǎozǐ also spoke of what could be called the 5 main quiescences (virtues) of the Dàodéjīng:

1. Xuánndé 玄德: quiescence of the profound; chapter 10, line 7; chapter 51, line 5; chapter 65, lines 5 and 6.
2. Kǒngdé 孔德: quiescence of emptiness; chapter 21, line 1.
3. Shángdé 上德: upper quiescence; chapter 38, line 1 and 2; chapter 41, line 2.
5. Chángdé 常德: quiescence of nature; chapter 28, lines 1, 2 and 3.

From these 5 “virtues” we can clearly see that the words virtue, virtuosity, integrity, or inner power appear to be incorrect translations. The English and Confucian meaning of virtue is to do with having high moral standards.
Lǎozǐ recommends nature’s way and following its principles as the highest form of living. Just as nature can seem very harsh and certainly lacking in morals in the human sense of the word, Lǎozǐ said, treat the people like (sacrificial) straw dogs (chapter 5, line 1). Lǎozǐ’s dé had little to do with morals in the modern sense of the word. From the above five “virtues,” we can see that Lǎozǐ’s “virtue” was based on following the principles of Dào and therefore, being natural in personal living and the governing of a state. The “virtues” mentioned above are a wisdom of the Dào. Initially, I had decided to keep dé translated as virtue (due to its prolific use) but as this paper is a direct translation into English and virtue is a very incorrect translation, changing it was necessary. If multiple words are used, the translation for dé could be, someone who adheres and lives by the principles of the Dào or the principles of naturalness. I therefore chose dé to be translated as “quiescence,” which is the state of being natural or of non-action.

**Non-action 無為**

Wúwéi is specifically mentioned eleven times in nine different chapters within the Dàodéjīng:

3. Chapter 37, line 1: [the] constant Dào [is] non-action, so nothing [is] not done. [If] feudal lords [and] kings [are] able to abide [by it, then] ten thousand things will [them] selves transform.
4. Chapter 38, line 2: upper quiescence [has] no action, so nothing [has] action, lower quiescence acts, so [it] has action.
5. Chapter 43, line 2: so, I [therefore] know [that] non-action has benefit.
6. Chapter 43, line 3: teaching without words, the benefit [of] non-action, hardly [anything that is] underneath [the] sky [can] catch it.
8. Chapter 57, line 3: therefore, the sage says: “I [am] non-action, so [the] people [them] selves transform.”
9. Chapter 63, line 1: actions [have] no actions.
10. Chapter 64, line 5: so, the sage [uses] non-action, therefore, nothing fails, [the] sage does [not hold] [on], therefore, nothing loses.

Wúwéi and its addition wúbùwéi is the cornerstone philosophy of the Dàodéjīng and has been translated in many different ways, two examples are: non-action, so no action is not done or use non-action, so you can do anything. I prefer: emptiness [in] action, so nothing [is] not done. The key difference here is that nearly all translations take wú 無 to mean “no” or “non” 不, which is sometimes the way it is used even within the Dàodéjīng as a stand-alone character but without the wéi 為 aspect. I propose that the wú 無 in wúwéi 無為 can also mean emptiness (or nothingness) and it does not only need to mean “no/non.” In Chapter 11, we see wú 無 obviously used as emptiness. There is also the idea of wújí 無極 or utmost emptiness used in chapter 28, line 2, where wú 無 also means emptiness/nothingness. As mentioned above, it appears as though Lǎozǐ’s Dào is that profound, mysterious, abstruse something within emptiness that has produced both the earth and the sky and everything within. Lǎozǐ’s Dào is not intrinsically empty as it produced everything we see; therefore, it can do anything.

The cornerstone concept of Lǎozǐ which is wúwéi (non-action or emptiness in action) follows from this idea of the Dào. Wúwéi therefore has two meanings, firstly, in the action of the mind it seems to mean stillness, peace and quiet. In action of the body it means, letting nature take its natural course of events and to not interfere. Lǎozǐ gives many examples of how the sage acts, what he does and how he manages his affairs. These are all examples of how the sage uses the concept of wúwéi in daily living. The cornerstone of the sage is his non-interference, being natural and having a kind of stillness. This stillness is not explicitly mentioned as the mind. Lǎozǐ instead seems to describe stillness as an overall state of being.

**Stillness, quiet, peacefulness 靜**

Lǎozǐ consistently reminds the reader to be still, quiet and peaceful. He talks about these three in the way that they are the natural state of being and by having this natural state, everything will stabilise and there will be no harm to yourself or others. The key concepts are as follows:

1. Be empty, so you can have stillness (chapter 16, line 1)
2. To return to stillness is to return to a natural state of being (chapter 16, line 2)
3. Stillness is achieved by having no desires (chapter 37, line 4)
4. Following the principles of the female, valley spirit and mother and one can also achieve stillness (chapter 61, line 2)

Lǎozǐ’s use of stillness, quiet and peacefulness is found in the following chapters and lines:
1. Chapter 16, line 1
2. Chapter 16, line 2
3. Chapter 26, line 1
4. Chapter 35, line 2
5. Chapter 37, line 4
6. Chapter 45, line 3
7. Chapter 61, line 2

The valley, the female, the mother 谷，雌，母

As the Đại produced everything, Lǎozǐ uses feminine similes such as, the valley spirit, the profound female and the mother to represent it. The key concepts of these female principles are:

1) The female is like a valley in the way that everything flows down to it and from this, it can produce life. To follow and understand the female principle is to be like a ravine and if you abide by this ravine idea it is called constant quiescence.
2) To have this constant quiescence is to return to the mother or Đại, by which you will achieve longevity.

See Lǎozǐ’s use of the valley, the female and the mother in the following chapter and lines:
1. Chapter 6, line 1
2. Chapter 6, line 2
3. Chapter 10, line 5
4. Chapter 20, line 8
5. Chapter 28, line 1
6. Chapter 28, line 3
7. Chapter 32, line 5
8. Chapter 39, line 1
9. Chapter 52, line 2
10. Chapter 59, line 2
11. Chapter 61, line 1
12. Chapter 61, line 2

Softness 柔弱

Softness is another recurring theme. It can be summed up as follows:
1. As softness is like water, it does not contend (chapter 8, line 1)
2. The breath should be made soft (chapter 10, line 2)
3. Softness can have miraculous benefits (chapter 43, line 1)
4. Softness is like water, it is strong, cannot be defeated and will always defeat the hard (chapter 52, line 4; chapter 78, lines 1 and 2)
5. Softness appears weak but is not (chapter 55, line 3)
6. With softness one can achieve longevity (chapter 76, lines 1, 2, 3, 5)
7. Softness is better than hardness (chapter 78, line 2)

Nature 自然

The concept of zì rá n 自然 (nature or natural) is mentioned five times specifically within the Đại. The
main theme of its meaning is as follows:
1. Lǎozǐ calls himself natural and says that he acts naturally (chapter 17, line 4)
2. Nature follows the principle of no excesses (止知) (chapter 23, line 1)
3. The Đào models itself on nature (chapter 25, line 5)
4. The idea of quiescence is the idea of naturalness (chapter 55, line 1)
5. The sage tries to help everyone to be natural (chapter 64, line 7)

The return 彈
The idea of return is a fundamental concept within the Đaodêjìng and refers to a return to:
1. Emptiness/nothingness (chapter 14, line 4)
2. Naturalness or the constant (chapter 16, line 2)
3. Root (chapter 16, line 2)
4. Stillness (chapter 16, line 2)
5. Life (chapter 16, line 2)
6. Brightness (chapter 16, line 2)
7. Infant (chapter 28, line 1)
8. Simplicity (chapter 28, line 3)
9. Utmost emptiness (chapter 28, line 2)
10. Quiescence (chapter 60, line 4)
11. Đào (inferred indirectly)

Emptiness 無
The idea of emptiness is another important concept in the Đaodêjìng and refers primarily to the Đào and its functioning:
1. Non-action or emptiness in action (see above under non-action)
2. The emptiness of things like rooms and cups (see chapter 11)
3. Emptiness/nothingness (see chapter 14, line 4)
4. The utmost emptiness (see chapter 28)

Simplicity 樸
The idea of simplicity is as follows:
1. Honesty (chapter 15, line 2)
2. An idea or concept to embrace within your own life (chapter 19, line 4)
3. Naturalness (chapter 28, line 3)
4. Something that should not be lost (chapter 28, line 4)
5. Something the Đào has (chapter 32, line 1)
6. A method to overcome desires (chapter 37, lines 2 and 3; chapter 57, line 3)

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

**No desire** 無欲

One of Lǎozǐ’s hallmark techniques for returning (to the Dào), living naturally and managing the people, is to have no desires. Lǎozǐ’s use of no desire is as follows:

1. Have no desire to observe the mysteries (chapter 1, line 3)
2. Make the people have no desire, so those with wisdom dare not act (chapter 3, line 5)
3. The Dào has no desire (chapter 34, line 3)
4. With the nameless simplicity, there is no desire (chapter 37, line 3)
5. Having no desire and the people are automatically simple (chapter 57, line 3)

**The sage** 聖人

The sage is an exemplar figure of someone who has embraced the Dào. The key point is that he is someone that the rulers should model themselves on. Lǎozǐ describes him in the following ways:

1. He uses the concept of non-action (chapter 2, line 3; chapter 26, line 2; chapter 47, line 3; chapter 63, line 3; chapter 64, line 5)
2. He teaches others by being an example (chapter 2, line 3)
3. He treats people like straw dogs in the way he lets nature take its course (chapter 5, line 1)
4. He does not live for the self (chapter 7, line 2)
5. He does not live his life by getting attached to the desires that arise from fulfilling the five senses (chapter 12, line 6)
6. He holds onto the one (chapter 22, line 1)
7. He is always helping the people (chapter 26, line 2)
8. He does not harm people (chapter 28, line 4; chapter 60, line 3; chapter 66, line 3)
9. He gets rid of extremes, extravagances and excesses (chapter 29, line 5)
10. He does not stand out from other people (chapter 49, line 1)
11. He helps people to be natural and simple (chapter 49, line 4; chapter 64, line 7)
12. He does not interfere (chapter 57, line 3)
13. He follows the principles of non-action (chapter 57, line 3; chapter 64, line 5)
14. He is balanced in his actions (chapter 58, line 4)
15. The sage takes things to be difficult, so in the end they are not difficult (chapter 63, line 4)
16. He has no desires (chapter 64, line 7)
17. He does not stand out as something special (chapter 70, line 6)
18. The sage has no sickness (chapter 71, line 3)
19. He is not boastful (chapter 72, line 4)
20. He understands the difficulties of life (chapter 73, line 3)

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