

## ■ CHAPTER FOUR ■

LAOZI

# ( “*The Daodejing*” )

### *Introduction*

Traditionally, Laozi 老子 is said to have been an older contemporary of Confucius and the author of the *Laozi* or *Daodejing* 道德經. But most contemporary scholars regard Laozi (literally “Old Master”) as a mythical character and the *Laozi* to be composite work. The present version of the text consists of short passages, from a variety of sources, over half of which are rhymed. These were collected together into a single volume of eighty-one chapters that were then divided into two books. Book I consists of chapters one through thirty-seven, the *dao* 道, “Way,” half of the text; Book II consists of chapters thirty-eight through eighty-one, the *de* 德, “Virtue,” half. On the basis of this organization, this version of the text came to be known as the *Daodejing*, which means simply “The Classic of *Dao* and *De*.” This division in no way reflects the contents of the chapters themselves, except that the first chapter begins with the word *dao* and the thirty-eighth chapter begins by describing the highest *de*. The text may have reached its present form sometime during the third or perhaps second century B.C.E. Another version of the text, named after its place of discovery, *Mawangdui* 馬王堆, is similar in content and firmly dated to the middle of the second century B.C.E. But in the *Mawangdui* version, the order of the Books is reversed, giving us the *Dedaojing*.

Though it was probably cobbled together from different sources, the *Laozi* may well have been assembled during a relatively short period of time and perhaps by a single editor. When it was put together, China was near the end of a prolonged era of fierce interstate rivalry known as the Warring States Period (see *Important Periods*). The text can be understood, at least

in part, as a reaction to this troubled age. In it we hear the lament of a time tired of war and chaos, one yearning for a bygone age of innocence, security, and peace. The text denounces wars of expansion and government corruption, and traces both complaints to the unbounded greed and ambition of those in power. These ideas are connected to the view that excessive desire per se is bad and the related belief that our “real” or “natural” desires are actually quite modest and limited. The text claims that it is unnatural to have excessive desires and having them will not only not lead to a satisfying life but paradoxically to destitution, want, alienation, and self-destruction.

The *Laozi* appeals to an earlier golden age in human history, before people made sharp distinctions among things. This was a time when values and qualities were not clearly distinguished, when things simply were as they were and people acted out of pre-reflective spontaneity. Chapter thirty-eight describes the history of the decline of the Way from an earlier golden age to its present debased state. The *dao* declined as civilization and human self-consciousness arose. The *Laozi* urges us to return to the earlier, natural state when the Way was fully realized in the world. We are to “untangle,” “blunt” and “round off” the sharp corners of our present life and let our “wheels move only along old (and presumably more comfortable) ruts.”

According to the *Laozi*, the *dao* is the source, sustenance, and ideal state of all things in the world. It is “hidden” and it contains within it the patterns of all that we see, but it is not ontologically transcendent. In the apt metaphor of the text, it is the “root” of all things. The *dao* is *ziran* 自然, “so of itself” or “spontaneous,” and its unencumbered activity brings about various natural states of affairs through *wuwei* 無為, “nonaction” (see *Important Terms*). Human beings have a place in the *dao* but are not particularly exalted. They are simply things among things (a view well represented by the marvelous landscape paintings inspired by Daoism).<sup>1</sup> Because of their unbridled desires and their unique capacity to think, act intentionally, and alter their nature—thus acting contrary to *wuwei* and bringing about states that are not *ziran*—humans tend to forsake their proper place and upset the natural harmony of the Way. The *Laozi* seeks to undo the consequences of such misguided human views and practices and lead us to “return” to the earlier ideal. The text is more a form of philosophical therapy than the presentation of a theory. We are to be challenged by its paradoxes and moved by its images and poetic cadence more than by any arguments it presents.

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<sup>1</sup>For an example, see the web site for this volume.

## *Book One*

### *Chapter One*

A Way that can be followed is not a constant Way.<sup>2</sup>  
 A name that can be named is not a constant name.  
 Nameless, it is the beginning of Heaven and earth;<sup>3</sup>  
 Named, it is the mother of the myriad creatures.  
 And so,  
     Always eliminate desires in order to observe its mysteries;  
     Always have desires in order to observe its manifestations.  
 These two come forth in unity but diverge in name.  
 Their unity is known as an enigma.<sup>4</sup>  
 Within this enigma is yet a deeper enigma.  
 The gate of all mysteries!

### *Chapter Two*

Everyone in the world knows that when the beautiful strives to be  
     beautiful, it is repulsive.  
 Everyone knows that when the good strives to be good, it is no good.<sup>5</sup>  
 And so,  
     To have and to lack generate each other.<sup>6</sup>  
     Difficult and easy give form to each other.  
     Long and short off-set each other.  
     High and low incline into each other.  
     Note and rhythm harmonize with each other.  
     Before and after follow each other.

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<sup>2</sup>Unlike the case of the following line, which has a similar basic structure, there is no way to reproduce in English the alternating nominal and verbal uses of the word *dao* 道, “Way.” More literally, the first line reads, *dao* 道 [a] “Way,” “path,” or “teaching,” *kedao* 可道, [which] “can be talked about” or “followed,” *fei changdao* 非常道, “is not a constant Way.” Cf. the grammar and sense of the poem “The Thorny Bush Upon the Wall” in the *Odes* (*Mao* # 46). For other passages that discuss the Way and names, see chapters 32, 34.

<sup>3</sup>On the idea of being “nameless” see chapters 32, 37, and 41.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. the reference to *xuantong* 玄同, “Enigmatic Unity,” in chapter 56.

<sup>5</sup>The point is the common theme that self-conscious effort to be excellent in any way fatally undermines itself. Cf. for example, chapters 38, 81.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. chapter 40.

This is why sages abide in the business of nonaction,<sup>7</sup>  
 and practice the teaching that is without words.<sup>8</sup>  
 They work with the myriad creatures and turn none away.<sup>9</sup>  
 They produce without possessing.<sup>10</sup>  
 They act with no expectation of reward.<sup>11</sup>  
 When their work is done, they do not linger.<sup>12</sup>  
 And, by not lingering, merit never deserts them.

### *Chapter Three*

Not paying honor to the worthy leads the people to avoid contention.  
 Not showing reverence for precious goods<sup>13</sup> leads them to not steal.  
 Not making a display of what is desirable leads their hearts away from  
 chaos.<sup>14</sup>  
 This is why sages bring things to order by opening people's hearts <sup>15</sup> and  
 filling their bellies.  
 They weaken the people's commitments and strengthen their bones;  
 They make sure that the people are without *zhi*, "knowledge,"<sup>16</sup> or  
 desires;  
 And that those with knowledge do not dare to act.  
 Sages enact nonaction and everything becomes well ordered.

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<sup>7</sup>For *wuwei* 無為, "nonaction," see *Important Terms*. The seminal study of this idea, which explores the notion across different schools of early Chinese philosophy, is Edward G. Slingerland's Ph.D. dissertation, *Effortless Action: Wuwei as a Spiritual Ideal in Early China*, (Stanford University, 1998).

<sup>8</sup>Cf. a similar line in chapter 43.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. chapter 34.

<sup>10</sup>This line also occurs in chapters 10 and 51.

<sup>11</sup>This line also appears in chapters, 10, 51, and 77.

<sup>12</sup>Recognizing that the credit for their success lies with the Way and not with themselves is a characteristic attitude of Daoist sages. For similar ideas, see chapters 9, 17, 34, and 77. This and the previous line occur together in chapter 77.

<sup>13</sup>For other passages discussing "precious goods," see chapters 12 and 64.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. *Analects* 12.18.

<sup>15</sup>See *xin* 心, "heart," under *Important Terms*.

<sup>16</sup>See *zhi* 智, "wisdom," under *Important Terms*.

*Chapter Four*

The Way is like an empty vessel;  
 No use could ever fill it up.  
 Vast and deep!  
 It seems to be the ancestor of the myriad creatures.  
 It blunts their sharpness;<sup>17</sup>  
 Untangles their tangles;  
 Softens their glare;  
 Merges with their dust.  
 Deep and clear!  
 It seems to be there.  
 I do not know whose child it is;  
 It is the image of what was before the Lord himself!<sup>18</sup>

*Chapter Five*

Heaven and earth are not benevolent;  
 They treat the myriad creatures as straw dogs.<sup>19</sup>  
 Sages are not benevolent;  
 They treat the people as straw dogs.  
 Is not the space between Heaven and earth like a bellows?  
 Empty yet inexhaustible!  
 Work it and more will come forth.  
 An excess of speech will lead to exhaustion,<sup>20</sup>  
 It is better to hold on to the mean.

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<sup>17</sup>The following four lines, preceded by two lines from chapter 52, appear in chapter 56.

<sup>18</sup>This is the only occurrence in the text of the character *di* 帝, "Lord," a name for the high god or supreme ancestral spirit of ancient China. For other passages concerning *xiang* 象, "image," see chapters 14, 21, 35, and 41.

<sup>19</sup>"Straw dogs" were used as ceremonial offerings. Before and during the ceremony, they were protected and cherished, but as soon as the ceremony ended, they were discarded and defiled. Others interpret the characters in this expression as "straw and dogs." The point is the same.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. the opening lines of chapter 23.

*Chapter Six*

The spirit of the valley never dies;  
 She is called the “Enigmatic Female.”  
 The portal of the Enigmatic Female;  
 Is called the root of Heaven and earth.  
 An unbroken, gossamer thread;  
 It seems to be there.  
 But use will not unsettle it.

*Chapter Seven*

Heaven is long lasting;  
 Earth endures.  
 Heaven is able to be long lasting and earth is able to endure, because they  
     do not live for themselves.  
 And so, they are able to be long lasting and to endure.  
 This is why sages put themselves last and yet come first;  
 Treat themselves as unimportant and yet are preserved.  
 Is it not because they have no thought of themselves, that they are able to  
     perfect themselves?

*Chapter Eight*

The highest good is like water.  
 Water is good at benefiting the myriad creatures, while not contending  
     with them.  
 It resides in the places that people find repellent, and so comes close to  
     the Way.  
 In a residence, the good lies in location.  
 In hearts, the good lies in depth.  
 In interactions with others, the good lies in benevolence.  
 In words, the good lies in trustworthiness.  
 In government, the good lies in orderliness.  
 In carrying out one's business, the good lies in ability.  
 In actions, the good lies in timeliness.  
 Only by avoiding contention can one avoid blame.

### Chapter Nine

To hold the vessel upright in order to fill it<sup>21</sup> is not as good as to stop in time.  
 If you make your blade too keen it will not hold its edge.  
 When gold and jade fill the hall none can hold on to them.  
 To be haughty when wealth and honor come your way is to bring disaster upon yourself.  
 To withdraw when the work is done is the Way of Heaven.<sup>22</sup>

### Chapter Ten

Embracing your soul and holding on to the One, can you keep them from departing?<sup>23</sup>  
 Concentrating your *qi* 氣 “vital energies”<sup>24</sup> and attaining the utmost suppleness, can you be a child?  
 Cleaning and purifying your enigmatic mirror, can you erase every flaw?  
 Caring for the people and ordering the state, can you eliminate all knowledge?  
 When the portal of Heaven opens and closes, can you play the part of the feminine?  
 Comprehending all within the four directions, can you reside in nonaction?  
 To produce them!  
 To nurture them!  
 To produce without possessing;<sup>25</sup>  
 To act with no expectation of reward;<sup>26</sup>  
 To lead without lording over;  
 Such is Enigmatic Virtue!<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>The reference is to a “tilting vessel” that would fall over and pour out its contents if filled to the top.

<sup>22</sup>For similar lines, see chapters 2, 17, 34, and 77.

<sup>23</sup>For other examples of “the One,” see chapters 22, 39, and 42.

<sup>24</sup>See *qi* under *Important Terms*.

<sup>25</sup>This line also appears in chapters 2 and 51.

<sup>26</sup>This line also appears in chapters 2, 51, and 77.

<sup>27</sup>Chapter 51 concludes with the same four lines. For another passage concerning *xuande* 玄德, “Enigmatic Virtue,” see chapter 65.

*Chapter Eleven*

Thirty spokes are joined in the hub of a wheel.  
 But only by relying on what is not there,<sup>28</sup> do we have the use of the carriage.  
 By adding and removing clay we form a vessel.  
 But only by relying on what is not there, do we have use of the vessel.  
 By carving out doors and windows we make a room.  
 But only by relying on what is not there, do we have use of the room.  
 And so, what is there is the basis for profit;  
 What is not there is the basis for use.

*Chapter Twelve*

The five colors blind our eyes.<sup>29</sup>  
 The five notes deafen our ears.  
 The five flavors deaden our palates.  
 The chase and the hunt madden our hearts.  
 Precious goods impede our activities.  
 This is why sages are for the belly and not for the eye;  
 And so they cast off the one and take up the other.<sup>30</sup>

*Chapter Thirteen*

Be apprehensive about favor or disgrace.  
 Revere calamity as you revere your own body.  
 What does it mean to be apprehensive about favor and disgrace?  
 To receive favor is to be in the position of a subordinate.  
 When you get it be apprehensive;  
 When you lose it be apprehensive.

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<sup>28</sup>Literally, only by relying on “nothing” (i.e., the empty space of the hub) can the wheel turn and the carriage roll.

<sup>29</sup>These sets of five refer to conventional standards of evaluation in regard to the different sensory faculties. The passage is not a rejection of the pleasures of the senses nor does it express skepticism regarding the senses per se. Rather, like the view one finds in *Zhuangzi*, chapter 2 (see pp. 209–19), it expresses a profound distrust of conventional categories and values and advocates moderation of sensual pleasures.

<sup>30</sup>This line also appears in chapters 38 and 72.



This is what it means to be apprehensive about favor and disgrace.  
 What does it mean to revere calamity as you revere your own body?  
 I can suffer calamity only because I have a body.  
 When I no longer have a body, what calamity could I possibly have?  
 And so,

Those who revere their bodies as if they were the entire world  
 can be given custody of the world.

Those who care for their bodies as if they were the entire world  
 can be entrusted with the world.

### *Chapter Fourteen*

Looked for but not seen, its name is “minute.”  
 Listened for but not heard, its name is “rarified.”  
 Grabbed for but not gotten, its name is “subtle.”<sup>31</sup>  
 These three cannot be perfectly explained, and so are confused and  
 regarded as one.  
 Its top is not clear or bright,  
 Its bottom is not obscure or dark.  
 Trailing off without end, it cannot be named.  
 It returns to its home, back before there were things.<sup>32</sup>  
 This is called the formless form, the image of no thing.<sup>33</sup>  
 This is called the confused and indistinct.  
 Greet it and you will not see its head;  
 Follow it and you will not see its tail.  
 Hold fast to the Way of old, in order to control what is here today.  
 The ability to know the ancient beginnings, this is called the thread of  
 the Way.

### *Chapter Fifteen*

In ancient times, the best and most accomplished scholars;  
 Were subtle, mysterious, enigmatic, and far-reaching.  
 Their profundity was beyond understanding.

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<sup>31</sup>Cf. the thought expressed in these lines to what one finds in chapter 35.

<sup>32</sup>Returning to an ideal past state is a common theme in the text. For other examples see chapters 16, 25, 28, 30, and 52.

<sup>33</sup>For other passages that concern *xiang*, “image,” see chapters 4, 21, 35, and 41.

Because they were beyond understanding, only with difficulty can we try to describe them:

Poised, like one who must ford a stream in winter.

Cautious, like one who fears his neighbors on every side.

Reserved, like a visitor.

Opening up, like ice about to break.

Honest, like unhewn wood.<sup>34</sup>

Broad, like a valley.

Turbid, like muddy water.

Who can, through stillness, gradually make muddied water clear?

Who can, through movement, gradually stir to life what has long been still?

Those who preserve this Way do not desire fullness.

And, because they are not full, they have no need for renewal.

### *Chapter Sixteen*

Attain extreme tenuousness;

Preserve quiet integrity.

The myriad creatures are all in motion!

I watch as they turn back.

The teeming multitude of things, each returns home to its root;

And returning to one's root is called stillness.

This is known as returning to one's destiny;

And returning to one's destiny is known as constancy.

To know constancy is called "enlightenment."

Those who do not know constancy wantonly produce misfortune.

To know constancy is to be accommodating.

To be accommodating is to work for the good of all.

To work for the good of all is to be a true king.

To be a true king is to be Heavenly.

To be Heavenly is to embody the Way.

To embody the Way is to be long lived,

And one will avoid danger to the end of one's days.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>*Pu* 朴, "unhewn wood," is a symbol for anything in its unadulterated natural state. In other contexts I will translate it as "simplicity," but here and in certain later passages the metaphor is an important part of the passage's sense. For other examples, see chapters 19, 28, 32, 37, and 57.

<sup>35</sup>This line also appears in chapter 52.

### Chapter Seventeen

The greatest of rulers is but a shadowy presence;  
 Next is the ruler who is loved and praised;  
 Next is the one who is feared;  
 Next is the one who is reviled.  
 Those lacking in trust are not trusted.<sup>36</sup>  
 But [the greatest rulers] are cautious and honor words.<sup>37</sup>  
 When their task is done and work complete,<sup>38</sup>  
 Their people all say, "This is just how we are."<sup>39</sup>

### Chapter Eighteen

When the great Way is abandoned, there are benevolence and righteousness.  
 When wisdom and intelligence come forth, there is great hypocrisy.  
 When the six familial relationships are out of balance, there are kind parents and filial children.  
 When the state is in turmoil and chaos, there are loyal ministers.<sup>40</sup>

### Chapter Nineteen

Cut off sageliness, abandon wisdom, and the people will benefit one-hundred-fold.  
 Cut off benevolence, abandon righteousness, and the people will return to being filial and kind.  
 Cut off cleverness, abandon profit, and robbers and thieves will be no more.  
 This might leave the people lacking in culture;

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<sup>36</sup>This line appears again in chapter 23. I interpret it as an expression of the *Daodejing's* characteristic view on *de* 德, "Virtue." For a discussion of the idea of "Virtue" in the *Daodejing* and how it differs from related Confucian conceptions of "Virtue" or "moral charisma" see my "The Concept of *de* ('Virtue') in the *Laozi*," in Csikszentmihalyi and Ivanhoe (1998), pp. 239–57. For other passages concerning the concept of trust, see chapters 49 and 63.

<sup>37</sup>Sages are reluctant and slow to speak, but their words are worthy of complete trust.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. chapters 2, 9, 34, and 77.

<sup>39</sup>Literally, "We are this way *ziran*, 自然." See *ziran* under *Important Terms*. For other examples, see chapters 23, 25, 51, and 64.

<sup>40</sup>The idea that more can lead to less and its implication that less can yield more is a theme that appears in several places in the text. For examples see chapters 19 and 38.

So give them something with which to identify:

Manifest plainness.

Embrace simplicity.<sup>41</sup>

Do not think just of yourself.

Make few your desires.

### *Chapter Twenty*

Cut off learning and be without worry!

How much distance is there really between agreement and flattery?

How much difference is there between the fair and the foul?

What other people fear one cannot but fear.

Immense!

Yet still not at its limit!

The multitude are bright and merry;

As if enjoying a grand festival;

As if ascending a terrace in springtime.

I alone am still and inactive, revealing no sign;<sup>42</sup>

Like a child who has not yet learned to smile.

Weak and weary, I seem to have nowhere to go.

The multitude all have more than enough.

I alone seem to be at a loss.

I have the mind of a fool!

Listless and blank!

The common folk are bright and brilliant.

I alone am muddled and confused.

The common folk are careful and discriminating.

I alone am dull and inattentive.

Vast!

Like the ocean!

Blown about!

As if it would never end!

The multitude all have something to do.

I alone remain obstinate and immobile, like some old rustic.

I alone differ from others, and value being nourished by mother.

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<sup>41</sup>Literally, “unhewn wood.” See n. 34.

<sup>42</sup>In this passage, the author enters into an autobiographical mode. See also chapters 69 and 70.

*Chapter Twenty-One*

The outward appearance of great Virtue comes forth from the Way alone.  
 As for the Way, it is vague and elusive.  
 Vague and elusive!  
 Within is an image.<sup>43</sup>  
 Vague and elusive!  
 Within is a thing.  
 Withdrawn and dark!  
 Within is an essence.  
 This essence is genuine and authentic.  
 Within there is trust.  
 From ancient times until the present day, its name has never left it.  
 It is how we know the origin of all things.  
 How do I know what the origin of all things is like?  
 Through this!

*Chapter Twenty-Two*

Those who are crooked will be perfected.  
 Those who are bent will be straight.  
 Those who are empty will be full.  
 Those who are worn will be renewed.  
 Those who have little will gain.  
 Those who have plenty will be confounded.  
 This is why sages embrace the One and serve as models for the whole world.<sup>44</sup>  
 They do not make a display of themselves and so are illustrious.  
 They do not affirm their own views and so are well known.  
 They do not brag about themselves and so are accorded merit.  
 They do not boast about themselves and so are heard of for a long time.<sup>45</sup>  
 Because they do not contend, no one in the world can contend with them.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>For other passages concerning *xiang*, “image,” see 4, 14, 35, and 41.

<sup>44</sup>For other examples of “the One,” see chapters 10, 39, and 42.

<sup>45</sup>See chapter 24 for a set of lines similar to the preceding four.

<sup>46</sup>The same line appears in chapter 66.

The ancient saying, “Those who are crooked will be perfected” is not without substance!<sup>47</sup>

Truly the sages are and remain perfect.

### *Chapter Twenty-Three*

To be sparing with words is what comes naturally.

And so,

A blustery wind does not last all morning;

A heavy downpour does not last all day.

Who produces these?

Heaven and earth!

If not even Heaven and earth can keep things going for a long time,

How much less can human beings?

This is why one should follow the Way in all that one does.

One who follows the Way identifies with the Way.

One who follows Virtue identifies with Virtue.

One who follows loss identifies with loss.

The Way is pleased to have those who identify with the Way.

Virtue is pleased to have those who identify with Virtue.

Loss is pleased to have those who identify with loss.

Those lacking in trust are not trusted.<sup>48</sup>

### *Chapter Twenty-Four*

Those who stand on tiptoe cannot stand firm.

Those who stride cannot go far.

Those who make a display of themselves are not illustrious.

Those who affirm their own views are not well known.

Those who brag about themselves are not accorded merit.

Those who boast about themselves are not heard of for long.<sup>49</sup>

From the point of view of the Way, such things are known as “excess provisions and pointless activities.”

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<sup>47</sup>While the *Daodejing* does not cite ancient sages or texts by name, here and elsewhere it clearly does quote ancient sources. For other examples see chapters 42, 62, and 69.

<sup>48</sup>The same line appears in chapter 17. See n. 36.

<sup>49</sup>See chapter 22 for a set of lines similar to the preceding four.

All creatures find these repulsive;  
And so one who has the Way does not abide in them.<sup>50</sup>

### *Chapter Twenty-Five*

There is a thing confused yet perfect, which arose before Heaven and earth.

Still and indistinct, it stands alone and unchanging.

It goes everywhere yet is never at a loss.

One can regard it as the mother of Heaven and earth.

I do not know its proper name;

I have given it the style “the Way.”<sup>51</sup>

Forced to give it a proper name, I would call it “Great.”

The Great passes on;

What passes on extends into the distance;

What extends into the distance returns to its source.<sup>52</sup>

And so the Way is great;

Heaven is great;

Earth is great;

And a true king too is great.

In the universe are four things that are great and the true king is first among them.

People model themselves on the earth.

The earth models itself on Heaven.

Heaven models itself on the Way.

The Way models itself on what is natural.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>This line appears again in chapter 31.

<sup>51</sup>There is a play here on the difference between one's *ming* 名, “proper name,” and one's *zi* 字, “style.” In traditional Chinese society one does not use the former, personal name in public. And so the author can be understood as saying he is not intimately familiar with the Dao and so knows only its style, or perhaps that it would be unseemly to speak its true and proper name to unfamiliars.

<sup>52</sup>Cf. The description of the Way found in the *Zhuangzi*, chapter 6, pp. 230–35.

<sup>53</sup>“Natural” is *ziran*.

*Chapter Twenty-Six*

The heavy is the root of the light.

The still rules over the agitated.<sup>54</sup>

This is why sages travel all day without leaving their baggage wagons.

No matter how magnificent the view or lovely the place, they remain aloof and unaffected.

How can a lord who can field ten thousand chariots take lightly his role in the world!

If he is light, he loses the root;

If he is agitated, he loses his rule.

*Chapter Twenty-Seven*

One who is good at traveling leaves no tracks or traces.

One who is good at speaking is free of slips or flaws.

One who is good at numbers need not count or reckon.

One who is good at closing up needs no bolts or locks,  
yet what they have secured cannot be opened.

One who is good at binding needs no rope or string,  
yet what they have tied cannot be undone.

This is why sages are good at saving people and so never abandon people,<sup>55</sup>

Are good at saving things and so never abandon things.

This is called inheriting enlightenment.<sup>56</sup>

And so the good person is teacher of the bad;

The bad person is material for the good.

Those who do not honor their teachers or who fail to care for their material,

though knowledgeable are profoundly deluded.

This is a fundamental mystery.

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<sup>54</sup>Cf. chapter 45.

<sup>55</sup>Cf. chapter 62.

<sup>56</sup>The expression *ximing* 襲明, “inheriting enlightenment,” is open to numerous interpretations. I take it as describing the good that bad people inherit from those who already are enlightened.



*Chapter Twenty-Eight*

Know the male but preserve the female, and be a canyon for all the world.

If you are a canyon for all the world, constant Virtue will never leave you, and you can return home to be a child.

Know the white but preserve the black, and be a model for all the world.

If you are a model for all the world, constant Virtue will never err, and you can return home to the infinite.

Know glory but preserve disgrace, and be a valley for all the world.

If you are a valley for all the world, constant Virtue will always be sufficient, and you can return to being unhewn wood.<sup>57</sup>

When unhewn wood is broken up, it becomes vessels.<sup>58</sup>

Sages put these to use and become leaders of the officials.

And so the greatest carving cuts nothing off.

*Chapter Twenty-Nine*

Those who would gain the world and do something with it, I see that they will fail.<sup>59</sup>

For the world is a spiritual vessel and one cannot put it to use.

Those who use it ruin it.

Those who grab hold of it lose it.<sup>60</sup>

And so,

Sometimes things lead and sometimes they follow;

Sometimes they breathe gently and sometimes they pant;

Sometimes they are strong and sometimes they are weak;

Sometimes they fight and sometimes they fall;

This is why sages cast off whatever is extreme, extravagant, or excessive.

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<sup>57</sup>Or “simplicity.” See n. 34.

<sup>58</sup>*Qi* 器, “vessel,” or “implement” is a common metaphor for a government official. Playing on this image, it carries the slightly negative connotation of someone with limited “capacity.” Cf. *Analects* 2.12 and the note to that passage.

<sup>59</sup>For *qu tianxia* 取天下, “gaining the world,” see chapters 48 and 57.

<sup>60</sup>These two lines also appear in chapter 64.

*Chapter Thirty*

One who serves a ruler with the Way will never take the world by force of arms.

For such actions tend to come back in kind.

Wherever an army resides, thorns and thistles grow.

In the wake of a large campaign, bad harvests are sure to follow.

Those who are good at military action achieve their goal and then stop.

They do not dare to rely on force of arms.

They achieve their goal but do not brag.

They achieve their goal but do not boast.

They achieve their goal but are not arrogant.

They achieve their goal but only because they have no choice.

They achieve their goal but do not force the issue.

For after a period of vigor there is old age.

To rely on such practices is said to be contrary to the Way.

And what is contrary to the Way will come to an early end.<sup>61</sup>

*Chapter Thirty-One*

Fine weapons are inauspicious instruments;

All creatures find them repulsive.

And so one who has the Way does not rely upon them.

At home, a cultivated person gives precedence to the left;

At war, a cultivated person gives precedence to the right.<sup>62</sup>

Weapons are inauspicious instruments, not the instruments of a cultivated person.

But if given no choice, the cultivated person will use them.

Peace and quiet are the highest ideals;

A military victory is not a thing of beauty.

To beautify victory is to delight in the slaughter of human beings.

One who delights in the slaughter of human beings will not realize his ambitions in the world.

On auspicious occasions, precedence is given to the left;

On inauspicious occasions, precedence is given to the right.

---

<sup>61</sup>The final three lines also appear at the end of chapter 55.

<sup>62</sup>The left side being associated with happy and auspicious events and the right side with sad and inauspicious events.

The lieutenant commander is stationed on the left;  
 The supreme commander is stationed on the right.  
 This shows that the supreme commander is associated with the rites of mourning.  
 When great numbers of people have been killed, one weeps for them in grief and sorrow.  
 Military victory is associated with the rites of mourning.

### *Chapter Thirty-Two*

The Way is forever nameless.<sup>63</sup>  
 Unhewn wood<sup>64</sup> is insignificant, yet no one in the world can master it.  
 If barons and kings could preserve it, the myriad creatures would all defer to them of their own accord;  
 Heaven and earth would unite and sweet dew would fall;  
 And the people would be peaceful and just, though no one so decrees.  
 When unhewn wood is carved up, then there are names.  
 Now that there are names, know enough to stop!  
 To know when to stop is how to stay out of danger.<sup>65</sup>  
 Streams and torrents flow into rivers and oceans,  
 Just as the world flows into the Way.

### *Chapter Thirty-Three*

Those who know others are knowledgeable;  
 Those who know themselves are enlightened.  
 Those who conquer others have power;  
 Those who conquer themselves are strong;  
 Those who know contentment are rich.<sup>66</sup>  
 Those who persevere have firm commitments.  
 Those who do not lose their place will endure.  
 Those who die a natural death are long-lived.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>On the idea of being “nameless,” see chapters 1, 37, and 41.

<sup>64</sup>Or “simplicity.” See n. 34.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. the similar line in chapter 44.

<sup>66</sup>For the value of *zu* 足, “contentment,” see chapters 44 and 46.

<sup>67</sup>Cf. the teaching quoted in chapter 42.

*Chapter Thirty-Four*

How expansive is the great Way!  
 Flowing to the left and to the right.  
 The myriad creatures rely upon it for life, and it turns none of them  
 away.<sup>68</sup>  
 When its work is done it claims no merit.<sup>69</sup>  
 It clothes and nourishes the myriad creatures, but does not lord it over  
 them.  
 Because it is always without desires, one could consider it insignificant.<sup>70</sup>  
 Because the myriad creatures all turn to it and yet it does not lord it over  
 them,  
 one could consider it great.  
 Because it never considers itself great, it is able to perfect its greatness.

*Chapter Thirty-Five*

Hold on to the great image and the whole world will come to you.<sup>71</sup>  
 They will come and suffer no harm;  
 They will be peaceful, secure, and prosperous.  
 Music and fine food will induce the passerby to stop.  
 But talk about the Way—how insipid and without relish it is!  
 Look for it and it cannot be seen;  
 Listen for it and it cannot be heard;  
 But use it and it will never run dry!

*Chapter Thirty-Six*

What you intend to shrink, you first must stretch.  
 What you intend to weaken, you first must strengthen.  
 What you intend to abandon, you first must make flourish.  
 What you intend to steal from, you first must provide for.  
 This is called subtle enlightenment.

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<sup>68</sup>Cf. chapter 2.

<sup>69</sup>Cf. chapters 2, 9, 17, and 77.

<sup>70</sup>Literally, one could *ming* 名, “name,” it or classify it among the small.

<sup>71</sup>For other passages that concern *xiang*, “image,” see chapters 4, 14, 21, and 41.

The supple and weak overcome the hard and the strong.  
 Fish should not be taken out of the deep pools.  
 The sharp implements of the state should not be shown to the people.<sup>72</sup>

### *Chapter Thirty-Seven*

The Way does nothing yet nothing is left undone.<sup>73</sup>  
 Should barons and kings be able to preserve it, the myriad creatures will  
 transform themselves.<sup>74</sup>  
 After they are transformed, should some still desire to act,  
 I shall press them down with the weight of nameless unhewn wood.<sup>75</sup>  
 Nameless unhewn wood is but freedom from desire.  
 Without desire and still, the world will settle itself.

## *Book Two*

### *Chapter Thirty-Eight*

Those of highest Virtue do not strive for Virtue and so they have it.  
 Those of lowest Virtue never stray from Virtue and so they lack it.  
 Those of highest Virtue practice nonaction and never act for ulterior  
 motives.  
 Those of lowest Virtue act and always have some ulterior motive.  
 Those of highest benevolence act, but without ulterior motives.  
 Those of highest righteousness act, but with ulterior motives.  
 Those who are ritually correct<sup>76</sup> act, but if others do not respond,  
 they roll up their sleeves and resort to force.

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<sup>72</sup>The proper sense of *liqi* 利器, “sharp implements,” is a matter of considerable controversy. Whether it refers to the weapons of the state, its ministers, labor-saving tools, the Daoist sage, or something else is hard to say, so I have left it ambiguous. Cf. the use in chapter 57.

<sup>73</sup>Cf. the similar line in chapter 48.

<sup>74</sup>For *zihua* 自化, “transform themselves,” see chapter 57.

<sup>75</sup>Or “nameless simplicity.” See n. 34. On the idea of being “nameless,” see chapters 1, 32, and 41.

<sup>76</sup>The word rendered here as “ritually correct” is *li* 禮, which in other contexts is translated as “having propriety.”

And so,

When the Way was lost there was Virtue;  
 When Virtue was lost there was benevolence;  
 When benevolence was lost there was righteousness;  
 When righteousness was lost there were the rites.

The rites are the wearing thin of loyalty and trust, and the beginning of chaos.

The ability to predict what is to come is an embellishment of the Way, and the beginning of ignorance.

This is why the most accomplished reside in what is thick, not in what is thin.

They reside in what is most substantial, not in mere embellishment.

And so they cast off the one and take up the other.<sup>77</sup>

### *Chapter Thirty-Nine*

In the past, among those who attained the One were these:<sup>78</sup>

Heaven attained the One and became pure;  
 Earth attained the One and became settled;  
 The spirits attained the One and became numinous;  
 The valley attained the One and became full;  
 The myriad creatures attained the One and flourished;  
 Barons and kings attained the One and became mainstays of the state.

All of this came about through the One.

If Heaven lacked what made it pure it might rip apart.

If earth lacked what made it settled it might open up.

If the spirits lacked what made them numinous they might cease their activity.

If the valley lacked what made it full it might run dry.

If the myriad creatures lacked what made them flourish they might become extinct.

If barons and kings lacked what made them honored and lofty they might fall.

And so what is honored has its root in what is base;

What is lofty has its foundation in what is lowly.

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<sup>77</sup>This line also appears in chapters 12 and 72.

<sup>78</sup>For other examples of “the One,” see chapters 10, 22, and 42.

This is why barons and kings refer to themselves as,  
 “The Orphan,” “The Desolate,” or “The Forlorn.” <sup>79</sup>  
 Is this not a case where what is base serves as the foundation!  
 Is it not?  
 And so the greatest of praise is without praise.  
 Do not desire what jingles like jade,  
 but what rumbles like rock!

### *Chapter Forty*

Turning back is how the Way moves.  
 Weakness is how the Way operates.  
 The world and all its creatures arise from what is there;  
 What is there arises from what is not there.

### *Chapter Forty-One*

When the best scholars hear about the Way,  
 They assiduously put it into practice.  
 When average scholars hear about the Way,  
 They sometimes uphold it and sometimes forsake it.  
 When the worst scholars hear about the Way,  
 They laugh at it!  
 If they did not laugh at it, it would not really be the Way.  
 And so the common saying has it:  
 The clearest Way seems obscure;  
 The Way ahead seems to lead backward;  
 The most level Way seems uneven;  
 Highest Virtue seems like a valley;  
 Great purity seems sullied,  
 Ample Virtue seems insufficient;  
 Solid Virtue seems unstable;  
 The simple and genuine seems fickle;  
 The great square has no corners;  
 The great vessel takes long to perfect;  
 The great note sounds faint;

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<sup>79</sup>The same expressions occur in chapter 42.

The great image is without shape;<sup>80</sup>  
 The Way is hidden and without name.<sup>81</sup>  
 Only the Way is good at providing and completing.

### *Chapter Forty-Two*

The Way produces the One.  
 The One produces two.  
 Two produces three.  
 Three produces the myriad creatures.<sup>82</sup>  
 The myriad creatures shoulder *yin* and embrace *yang*,  
     and by blending these *qi* “vital energies” they attain harmony.  
 People most despise being orphaned, desolate or forlorn,  
     and yet barons and kings take these as their personal appellations.<sup>83</sup>  
 And so sometimes diminishing a thing adds to it;  
 Sometimes adding to a thing diminishes it.  
 What others teach, I too teach: “The violent and overbearing will not die  
     a natural death.”  
 I shall take this as the father of all my teachings.

### *Chapter Forty-Three*

The most supple things in the world ride roughshod over the most rigid.  
 That which is not there can enter even where there is no space.  
 This is how I know the advantages of nonaction!

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<sup>80</sup>For other passages that concern *xiang* 象, “image,” see chapters 4, 14, 21, and 35.

<sup>81</sup>On the idea of being “nameless” see chapters 1, 32, and 37.

<sup>82</sup>The precise referents of these terms are hard to determine. I take the Way to be the most inclusive term designating the hidden, underlying source of things. The “one” would then be its *xiang* 象, “image,” the closest thing we can have to a picture or representation of the Way. (For other examples see chapters 10, 22, and 39.) The “two” would then be the fundamental *qi* 氣, “vital energies,” *yin* and *yang* (see *qi*, *yin* and *yang* under *Important Terms*). These, together with our image of the Way as a unified whole, give rise to everything in the world. A similar scheme is described in the appendices to the *Changes*. This process, whatever its particulars, was understood as a natural progression. There was no creator and the “nothing” out of which things arose is a primal state of undifferentiated vital energy, the state of no things but not absolute Nothingness. See Slingerland’s note on these lines in *Effortless Action*, page 145, note 28.

<sup>83</sup>See chapter 39.



The teaching that is without words,<sup>84</sup>  
 The advantages of nonaction,  
 Few in the world attain these.

### *Chapter Forty-Four*

Your name or your body, which do you hold more dear?  
 Your body or your property, which is of greater value?  
 Gain or loss, which is the greater calamity?  
 And so, deep affections give rise to great expenditures.  
 Excessive hoarding results in great loss.  
 Know contentment and avoid disgrace;<sup>85</sup>  
 Know when to stop and avoid danger;<sup>86</sup>  
 And you will long endure.

### *Chapter Forty-Five*

Great perfection seems wanting but use will not wear it out.  
 Great fullness seems empty but use will not drain it.  
 Great straightness seems crooked;  
 Great skillfulness seems clumsy;  
 Great speech seems to stammer.  
 Agitation overcomes cold.  
 Stillness overcomes heat.  
 Purity and stillness rectify Heaven and earth.

### *Chapter Forty-Six*

When the world has the Way, fleet-footed horses are used to haul dung.  
 When the world is without the Way, war horses are raised in the  
 suburbs.<sup>87</sup>  
 The greatest misfortune is not to know contentment.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Cf. the similar line in chapter 2.

<sup>85</sup>For the value of "contentment" see chapters 33 and 46.

<sup>86</sup>Cf. the similar line in chapter 32.

<sup>87</sup>Very close to the city, thus showing a heightened state of mobilization.

<sup>88</sup>For the value of "contentment" see chapters 33 and 44.

The worst calamity is the desire to acquire.  
 And so those who know the contentment of contentment are always  
 content.

### *Chapter Forty-Seven*

Without going out the door, one can know the whole world.  
 Without looking out the window, one can see the Way of Heaven.  
 The further one goes, the less one knows.  
 This is why sages  
     Know without going abroad,  
     Name without having to see,  
     Perfect through nonaction.

### *Chapter Forty-Eight*

In the pursuit of learning, one does more each day;  
 In the pursuit of the Way, one does less each day;  
 One does less and less until one does nothing;<sup>89</sup>  
 One does nothing yet nothing is left undone.<sup>90</sup>  
 Gaining the world always is accomplished by following no activity.<sup>91</sup>  
 As soon as one actively tries, one will fall short of gaining the world.

### *Chapter Forty-Nine*

Sages do not have constant hearts of their own;  
 They take the people's hearts as their hearts.  
     I am good to those who are good;  
     I also am good to those who are not good;  
     This is to be good out of Virtue.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Until one reaches the state of *wuwei*, "nonaction."

<sup>90</sup>Cf. the similar lines in chapter 37.

<sup>91</sup>For *wushi* 無事, "no activity," see chapters 57 and 63. For *qu tianxia*, "gaining the world," see chapters 29 and 57.

<sup>92</sup>I read this line, and the line three lines below it, as playing on the etymological and semantic relationship between *de* 德, "virtue," and *de* 得, "to get." Since those with virtue naturally are good to and trust others, they accrue ("get") Virtue; this enables them to gain ("get") the support of others and realize ("get") their greater ends. Cf. chapters 17, 23, 27, and 38.

I trust the trustworthy;  
 I also trust the untrustworthy.  
 This is to trust out of Virtue.  
 Sages blend into the world and accord with the people's hearts.  
 The people all pay attention to their eyes and ears;  
 The sages regard them as children.

### *Chapter Fifty*

Between life and death,  
 Three out of ten are the disciples of life;<sup>93</sup>  
 Three out of ten are the disciples of death;  
 Three out of ten create a place for death.<sup>94</sup>  
 Why is this?  
 Because of their profound desire to live.<sup>95</sup>  
 I have heard that those good at nurturing life,  
 On land do not meet with rhinoceroses or tigers,  
 And in battle do not encounter armored warriors.  
 Rhinoceroses find no place to thrust their horns;  
 Tigers find no place to sink their claws;  
 Soldiers find no place to drive in their blades.  
 Why is this?  
 Because such people have no place for death.

### *Chapter Fifty-One*

The Way produces them;  
 Virtue rears them;  
 Things shape them;  
 Circumstances perfect them.  
 This is why the myriad creatures all revere the Way and honor Virtue.

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<sup>93</sup>Cf. chapter 76.

<sup>94</sup>This passage has been interpreted in a wide variety of ways. I take its general theme to be the preservation of one's natural span of life, here connected to the idea that wanting something too badly often leads to its opposite. Some are fated to live long and others to die young. But about one in three bring misfortune on themselves. The missing person in ten is of course the sage. By not doing, sages avoid creating a place for death to enter.

<sup>95</sup>Cf. chapter 75.

The Way is revered and Virtue honored not because this is decreed,  
but because it is natural.

And so the Way produces them and Virtue rears them;

Raises and nurtures them;

Settles and confirms them;

Nourishes and shelters them.

To produce without possessing;<sup>96</sup>

To act with no expectation of reward;<sup>97</sup>

To lead without lording over;

Such is Enigmatic Virtue!<sup>98</sup>

### *Chapter Fifty-Two*

The world had a beginning;

This can be considered the mother of the world.

Knowing the mother, return and know her children;

Knowing her children, return and preserve their mother;

And one will avoid danger to the end of one's days.<sup>99</sup>

Stop up the openings;

Close the gates;<sup>100</sup>

To the end of one's life one will remain unperturbed.

Unstop the openings;

Multiply your activities;

And to the end of one's life one will be beyond salvation.

To discern the minute is called "enlightenment."

To preserve the weak is called "strength."

Use this light and return home to this enlightenment.

Do not bring disaster upon yourself.

This is called "practicing the constant."

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<sup>96</sup>This line also appears in chapters 2 and 10.

<sup>97</sup>This line also appears in chapters 2, 10, and 77.

<sup>98</sup>Chapter 10 concludes with these same four lines. For *xuande* 玄德, "Enigmatic Virtue," see chapter 65.

<sup>99</sup>This line also appears in chapter 16.

<sup>100</sup>This and the preceding line also appear in chapter 56.

*Chapter Fifty-Three*

If I know anything at all, I know that in following the great Way, there is  
 but one concern:  
 The great Way is smooth and easy;  
 Yet people love to take shortcuts!<sup>101</sup>  
 The court is resplendent;  
 Yet the fields are overgrown.  
 The granaries are empty;  
 Yet some wear elegant clothes;  
 Fine swords dangle at their sides;  
 They are stuffed with food and drink;  
 And possess wealth in gross abundance.  
 This is known as taking pride in robbery.  
 Far is this from the Way!

*Chapter Fifty-Four*

What is firmly grounded will not be pulled out.  
 What is firmly embraced will not be lost.  
 Through the sacrifices of one's descendants, it will never cease.  
 Cultivate it in oneself and its Virtue will be genuine.<sup>102</sup>  
 Cultivate it in one's family and its Virtue will be more than enough.  
 Cultivate it in one's village and its Virtue will be long lasting.  
 Cultivate it in one's state and its Virtue will be abundant.  
 Cultivate it throughout the world and its Virtue will be everywhere.<sup>103</sup>  
 And so, take stock of the self by looking at the self;  
 Take stock of the family by looking at the family;

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<sup>101</sup>See *Analects* 6.12 (not in this volume) for a related use of the word *jing* 徑, "shortcut."

<sup>102</sup>"It" refers to the Way. Note that in this and the following lines the word translated as "Virtue" also clearly has the sense of a kind of "power."

<sup>103</sup>The progression from cultivating the Way in oneself to cultivating it throughout the empire is reminiscent of the progression one sees in chapter 4 of the *Daxue* 大學, "Great Learning," a work not included in this volume. There we are told that those who wish to "make bright their shining Virtue throughout the world" must first "order their states." Those who wish to order their states must first "regulate their families," Those who wish to regulate their families must first "cultivate themselves" and so on. Wing-tsit Chan (p. 196) points out that Mencius identifies this basic idea as a "common saying" in *Mengzi* 4A5 (not in this volume).

Take stock of the village by looking at the village;  
 Take stock of the state by looking at the state;  
 Take stock of the world by looking at the world;  
 How do I know that the world is this way?  
 Through this!

### *Chapter Fifty-Five*

Those who are steeped in Virtue are like new-born children;<sup>104</sup>  
 Poisonous creatures will not strike them;  
 Fierce beasts will not seize them;  
 Birds of prey will not snatch them away.  
 Their bones are weak and sinews yielding and yet their grip is firm.  
 They do not yet know the union of male and female, but their potency is  
     at its height.  
 This is because they are perfectly pure;  
 They can wail all day without growing hoarse.  
 This is because they are perfectly balanced.  
 Knowing balance is called “constancy.”  
 Knowing constancy is called “enlightenment.”  
 What helps life along is called “inauspicious.”<sup>105</sup>  
 When the heart and mind is used to guide the *qi* 氣, “vital energies,” this  
     is called “forcing things.”<sup>106</sup>  
 For after a period of vigor there is old age.  
 To rely on such practices is said to be contrary to the Way.  
 And what is contrary to the Way will come to an early end.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>The early Confucian Mengzi also uses the newborn as an image for his ideal state of mind. See his discussion of the *chizi zhi xin* 赤子之心, “a child’s heart,” in *Mengzi* 4B12, not in this volume.

<sup>105</sup>Cf. the closing lines of *Zhuangzi*, chapter 5 (see p. 229), where Zhuangzi says, “Follow the natural and do not *yisheng* 益生, ‘help life along.’”

<sup>106</sup>Early Daoists tended to advocate allowing one’s *qi* to find their natural course. For example, see the “fasting of the heart and mind” passage in chapter 4 of the *Zhuangzi*, p. 223. They were opposed to those such as the early Confucian Mengzi, who argued that the mind should guide the vital energies. See Mengzi’s discussion of nourishing the “floodlike *qi*” in *Mengzi* 2A2.

<sup>107</sup>The final three lines also appear at the end of chapter 30.

*Chapter Fifty-Six*

Those who know do not talk about it;  
 Those who talk about it do not know.  
 Stop up the openings;  
 Close the gates;<sup>108</sup>  
 Blunt the sharpness;  
 Untangle the tangles;  
 Soften the glare;  
 Merge with the dust.<sup>109</sup>  
 This is known as Enigmatic Unity.<sup>110</sup>  
 And so one can neither be too familiar with nor too distant from them;  
 One can neither benefit nor harm them;  
 One can neither honor nor demean them,  
 And so they are honored by the whole world.<sup>111</sup>

*Chapter Fifty-Seven*

Follow what is correct and regular in ordering your state;  
 Follow what is strange and perverse in deploying your troops;  
 Follow no activity and gain the world.<sup>112</sup>  
 How do I know that things are this way?  
 Through this!  
 The more taboos and prohibitions there are in the world, the poorer the people.  
 The more sharp implements the people have, the more benighted the state.<sup>113</sup>  
 The more clever and skillful the people, the more strange and perverse things arise.  
 The more clear the laws and edicts, the more thieves and robbers.

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<sup>108</sup>This and the preceding line also appear together in chapter 52.

<sup>109</sup>This and the preceding three lines also appear together in chapter 4.

<sup>110</sup>Cf. chapter 1, "Their unity is known as an enigma."

<sup>111</sup>This line also appears in chapter 62.

<sup>112</sup>For *wushi*, "no activity," see chapters 48 and 63. For *qu tianxia*, "gaining the world," see chapters 29 and 48.

<sup>113</sup>For the expression "sharp implements" see chapter 36.

And so sages say,

“I do nothing and the people transform themselves;  
 I prefer stillness and the people correct and regulate themselves;  
 I engage in no activity and the people prosper on their own;  
 I am without desires and the people simplify<sup>114</sup> their own lives.”

### *Chapter Fifty-Eight*

The more dull and depressed the government, the more honest and agreeable the people.  
 The more active and searching the government, the more deformed and deficient the people.  
 Good fortune rests upon disaster;  
 Disaster lies hidden within good fortune.  
 Who knows the highest standards?  
 Perhaps there is nothing that is truly correct and regular!  
 What is correct and regular turns strange and perverse;  
 What is good turns monstrous.  
 Long indeed have the people been deluded.  
 And so sages are,  
     Square but do not cut,  
     Cornered but do not clip,  
     Upright but not imposing,  
     Shining but not dazzling.

### *Chapter Fifty-Nine*

In bringing order to the people or in serving Heaven, nothing is as good as frugality.  
 To be frugal is called submitting early on.  
 Submitting early on is known as deeply accumulating Virtue.  
 If you deeply accumulate Virtue, nothing can stand in your way.  
 If nothing can stand in your way, no one will know your limits.  
 If no one knows your limits, you can possess the state.  
 If you possess the mother of the state, you can long endure.  
 This is known as deep roots and strong stems.  
 This is the Way of long life and far-reaching vision.

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<sup>114</sup>Literally, “unhewn wood.” See n. 34.



*Chapter Sixty*

Ruling a great state is like cooking a small fish.<sup>115</sup>  
 When one manages the world through the Way, ghosts lose their  
 numinous qualities.  
 It's not that ghosts really lose their numinous qualities,  
 but that their numinous qualities do not injure human beings.<sup>116</sup>  
 Not only do their numinous qualities not injure human beings,  
 sages too do not injure human beings.<sup>117</sup>  
 Since neither of these two injures human beings, Virtue gathers and  
 accrues to both.

*Chapter Sixty-One*

A great state is like the delta of a mighty river;<sup>118</sup>  
 It is where the whole world gathers.  
 It is the female of the whole world.<sup>119</sup>  
 The female always gets the better of the male through stillness.  
 Through stillness, she places herself below the male.  
 And so, a great state, by placing itself below a lesser state, can take the  
 lesser state.  
 A lesser state, by placing itself below a great state, can be taken by the  
 greater state.  
 And so, one places itself below in order to take;  
 The other places itself below in order to be taken.

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<sup>115</sup>The idea is that too much attention and meddling will make either fall apart.

<sup>116</sup>Laozi seems here to be arguing against the idea, seen in thinkers like Mozi et al., that the ideal state requires the active participation of ghosts and other spirits in meting out rewards or punishments. Laozi does not deny the existence of such beings but, like Kongzi, sees a direct appeal to them as inappropriate. Cf. Kongzi's advice concerning ghosts and spirits in *Analects* 6.22.

<sup>117</sup>They do not disturb the people through too much attention and meddling.

<sup>118</sup>Literally, *xialiu* 下流, "low flow." Cf. the use of the same term in *Analects* 19.20 (not in this volume) "... the gentleman dislikes living in low places (*xialiu*) where all the foul things of the world collect." The Daoist of course inverts Confucian values, esteeming what the world regards as lowly.

<sup>119</sup>In the sense that the ideal great state places itself below and attracts the whole world. Also, like a valley or the delta of a river, the great state is like a woman in being fertile and having the ability to feed the whole world. Consider the common metaphor of the Nile as the "cradle of civilization." Cf. chapter 66.

The great state wants no more than to provide for all people alike.  
 The lesser state wants no more than to find someone to serve.  
 Since both can get what they want, it is fitting that the great state place  
 itself in the lower position.

### *Chapter Sixty-Two*

The Way is the inner sanctum of the myriad creatures.<sup>120</sup>  
 It is the treasure of the good man and the savior of the bad.  
 Fine words can sell things;<sup>121</sup>  
 Noble deeds can promote someone;  
 But can one cast away the bad in people?<sup>122</sup>  
 And so, when setting up the Son of Heaven or appointing the Three  
 Ministers,<sup>123</sup>  
 Those who offer up precious jades and present fine steeds are not as good  
 as those who stay in their seats and promote this Way.  
 Why was this Way so honored in ancient times?  
 Did they not say that through it,  
 “One could get what one seeks and escape punishment for one’s crimes?”  
 And so, this is why it is honored by the whole world.<sup>124</sup>

### *Chapter Sixty-Three*

Act, but through nonaction.  
 Be active, but have no activities.<sup>125</sup>  
 Taste, but have no tastes.<sup>126</sup>  
 No matter how great or small, many or few,

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<sup>120</sup>“Inner sanctum” is the translation of *ao* 奥, the southwest corner of one’s house where the household gods are lodged and worshipped.

<sup>121</sup>Cf. chapter 81.

<sup>122</sup>Cf. chapter 27.

<sup>123</sup>Cf. Mozi’s discussion of how the Son of Heaven and Three Ministers are to be appointed, in *Mozi*, chapter 2, “Obeying One’s Superiors,” pp. 60–63.

<sup>124</sup>This line also appears in chapter 56.

<sup>125</sup>For *wushi*, “no activities,” see chapters 48 and 57.

<sup>126</sup>The idea in each case is that one should do what one does in unpremeditated and spontaneous response to the situation at hand. One should do away with set schemes, categories, standards and plans, and follow one’s natural inclinations and tendencies. And so, for example, one should taste and savor what one finds pleasing, not what others might enjoy or what accords with some socially sanctioned view about good taste. Cf. chapter 12.

Repay resentment with Virtue.<sup>127</sup>

Plan for what is difficult while it is easy.

Work at what is great while it is small.

The difficult undertakings in the world all start with what is easy.

The great undertakings in the world all begin with what is small.

This is why sages never work at great things and are able to achieve greatness.

Those who easily enter into promises always prove unworthy of trust.

Those who often think that things are easy regularly encounter difficulties.

And so sages consider things difficult and in the end are without difficulties.

### *Chapter Sixty-Four*

What is at peace is easy to secure.

What has yet to begin is easy to plan for.

What is brittle is easy to scatter.

What is faint is easy to disperse.

Work at things before they come to be;

Regulate things before they become disordered.

A tree whose girth fills one's embrace sprang from a downy sprout;

A terrace nine stories high arose from a layer of dirt;

A journey of a thousand leagues began with a single step.

Those who use it ruin it.

Those who grab hold of it lose it.<sup>128</sup>

This is why sages practice nonaction and so do not ruin;

They do not lay hold and so do not lose.

People often ruin things just when they are on the verge of success.

Be as careful at the end as you are at the beginning and you will not ruin things.

This is why sages desire to be without desires and show no regard for precious goods.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>Here we see a clear contrast with the view of early Confucians. See *Analects* 14.34. Cf. chapter 49.

<sup>128</sup>These two lines also appear in chapter 29.

<sup>129</sup>Cf. *Mengzi* 7B35 (not in this volume), "For cultivating the heart and mind nothing is better than to make few one's desires."

They study what is not studied and return to what the multitude pass by.<sup>130</sup>

They work to support the myriad creatures in their natural condition and never dare to act.

### *Chapter Sixty-Five*

In ancient times, those good at practicing the Way did not use it to enlighten the people,

but rather to keep them in the dark.<sup>131</sup>

The people are hard to govern because they know too much.

And so to rule a state with knowledge is to be a detriment to the state.

Not to rule a state through knowledge is to be a blessing to the state.

Know that these two provide the standard.

Always to know this standard is called Enigmatic Virtue.<sup>132</sup>

How profound and far-reaching is Enigmatic Virtue!

It turns back with things;

And only then is there the Great Compliance.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Daoist sages take Nature as their model. In philosophical discussions of the time, there was a debate about whether the proper content of learning is part of or opposed to what is naturally so. This debate in turn was a reflection of a larger debate about the character of human nature. Mengzi endorses only particular natural tendencies—those that incline us toward morality—and on this basis claims that human nature is good. Xunzi argues that our untutored nature inclines us toward bad states of affairs. On this basis he concludes our nature is bad and must be reformed through protracted study and practice. We can see Laozi, Mengzi, and Xunzi as representing a spectrum of views about the proper content of learning that reflects their different views about the goodness of our pre-reflective nature, running from greatest to least confidence in our raw natural state.

<sup>131</sup>The idea that the best of actions flow forth without reflection or knowledge was not uncommon in early China. In his note on this line, Wing-tsit Chan cites a passage from the *Odes* in which the Lord on High commends King Wen for his behavior, “Without reflection or knowledge, you comply with my principles” (*Mao* # 241). See Chan, p. 216. Cf. *Analects* 15.5.

<sup>132</sup>For *xuande*, “Enigmatic Virtue,” see chapters 10 and 51.

<sup>133</sup>This is the only occurrence of the expression *dashun* 大順, “Great Compliance,” in the text. However, as Arthur Waley (p. 223) points out in his note to this chapter, it does occur in *Zhuangzi*, chapter 12 (not in this volume). Note too that the same word *shun* appears in *Mao* # 241 quoted in n. 131 above.

*Chapter Sixty-Six*

The rivers and ocean are able to rule over a hundred valleys,  
 because they are good at placing themselves in the lower position.<sup>134</sup>  
 And so they are able to rule over a hundred valleys.  
 This is why if you want to be above the people you must proclaim that  
 you are below them.  
 If you want to lead the people, you must put yourself behind them.  
 This is how sages are able to reside above the people without being  
 considered a burden,  
 How they are able to be out in front of the people without being  
 regarded as a harm.  
 This is why the whole world delights in supporting them and never  
 wearies.  
 Because they do not contend, no one in the world can contend with  
 them. <sup>135</sup>

*Chapter Sixty-Seven*

The whole world agrees in saying that my Way is great but appears  
 unworthy.  
 It is only because it is great that it appears to be unworthy.  
 If it appeared worthy, it would have become small long ago.  
 Isn't that so!  
 I have three treasures that I hold on to and preserve:  
     The first I call loving kindness;  
     The second I call frugality;  
     The third I call never daring to put oneself first in the world.  
 The kind can be courageous;  
 The frugal can be generous;  
 Those who never dare to put themselves first in the world  
     can become leaders of the various officials.  
 Now to be courageous without loving kindness,  
 To be generous without frugality,  
 To put oneself first without putting oneself behind others,

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<sup>134</sup>Cf. chapter 61.

<sup>135</sup>The same line appears in chapter 22.

These will lead to death.<sup>136</sup>  
 If one has loving kindness, in attack one will be victorious,  
 In defense one will be secure.  
 For Heaven will save you and protect you with loving kindness.

### *Chapter Sixty-Eight*

Those good at fighting are never warlike.<sup>137</sup>  
 Those good at attack are never enraged.  
 Those good at conquering their enemies never confront them.  
 Those good at using others put themselves in a lower position.  
 This is called the Virtue of noncontention;  
 This is called the power of using others;  
 This is called matching up with Heaven, the highest achievement of the  
 ancients.

### *Chapter Sixty-Nine*

Military strategists have a saying,  
 "I never dare to play host but prefer to play guest."<sup>138</sup>  
 I never dare to advance an inch but retreat a foot."  
 This is called a formation without form,  
 Rolling up one's sleeve but having no arm,  
 Forcing the issue but lacking an enemy.<sup>139</sup>  
 Who can avoid misfortune in war?  
 But there is none greater than underestimating the enemy!  
 Underestimating the enemy almost cost me my three treasures.<sup>140</sup>  
 And so when swords are crossed and troops clash, the side that grieves  
 shall be victorious.

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<sup>136</sup>The idea that true virtue lies in a harmony within a tension, that it requires a balance between extremes, is seen in many traditions. Early Confucians too held a version of this view. For example, see *Analects* 8.2.

<sup>137</sup>That is, they are not overly aggressive and pugnacious.

<sup>138</sup>They avoid initiating the action, the first move being the prerogative of the host.

<sup>139</sup>Cf. the last two lines with a similar line in chapter 38.

<sup>140</sup>See chapter 67 for a possible reference.

*Chapter Seventy*

My teachings are easy to understand and easy to implement;  
But no one in the whole world has been able to understand or implement  
them.

My teachings have an ancestor and my activities have a lord;  
But people fail to understand these and so I am not understood.

Those who understand me are rare;<sup>141</sup>

Those who take me as a model are honored.

This is why sages wear coarse cloth while cherishing precious jade.<sup>142</sup>

*Chapter Seventy-One*

To know that one does not know is best;

Not to know but to believe that one knows is a disease.<sup>143</sup>

Only by seeing this disease as a disease can one be free of it.

Sages are free of this disease;

Because they see this disease as a disease, they are free of it.

*Chapter Seventy-Two*

When the people do not fear what warrants awe,

Something truly awful will come to them.

Do not constrain their homes or villages.

Do not oppress their lives.

Because you do not oppress them, you will not be oppressed.

This is why sages know themselves but do not make a display of  
themselves;

They care for themselves but do not revere themselves.

And so they cast off the one and take up the other.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>Cf. this complaint with Kongzi's remark in *Analects* 14.35.

<sup>142</sup>They appear common and unworthy on the outside but possess a secret treasure within. In *Analects* 17.1 (not in this volume) a man named Yang Huo criticizes Kongzi's reluctance to take office by asking him, "Can one who cherishes his treasure within and allows his state to go astray be considered benevolent?" Cf. *Analects* 9.13.

<sup>143</sup>This passage is similar in thought to *Analects* 2.17 (not in this volume) "If you know something realize that you know it. If you do not know something realize that you do not. This is what knowing is."

<sup>144</sup>This line also appears in chapters 12 and 38.

*Chapter Seventy-Three*

To be courageous in daring leads to death;  
 To be courageous in not daring leads to life.  
 These two bring benefit to some and loss to others.  
 Who knows why Heaven dislikes what it does?  
 Even sages regard this as a difficult question.  
 The Way does not contend but is good at victory;  
 Does not speak but is good at responding;  
 Does not call but things come of their own accord;  
 Is not anxious but is good at laying plans.  
 Heaven's net is vast;  
 Its mesh is loose but misses nothing.

*Chapter Seventy-Four*

If the people are not afraid of death, why threaten them with death?  
 "But what if I could keep the people always afraid of death and seize and  
 put to death those who dare to act in strange or perverse ways?  
 Who then would dare to act in such a manner?"<sup>145</sup>  
 There is always the killing done by the Chief Executioner.<sup>146</sup>  
 The Chief Executioner is the greatest carver among carpenters.  
 Those who would do the work of the greatest carver among carpenters,  
 rarely avoid wounding their own hands.

*Chapter Seventy-Five*

The people are hungry because those above eat up too much in taxes;  
 This is why the people are hungry.  
 The people are difficult to govern because those above engage in action;  
 This is why the people are difficult to govern.  
 People look upon death lightly because those above are obsessed with  
 their own lives;<sup>147</sup>  
 This is why the people look upon death lightly.  
 Those who do not strive to live are more worthy than those who cherish life.

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<sup>145</sup>These two lines introduce a question and mark a dialogue within the text. Cf. *Analects* 12.19.

<sup>146</sup>The death that Heaven brings to each person.

<sup>147</sup>Cf. chapter 50.



*Chapter Seventy-Six*

When alive human beings are supple and weak;  
 When dead they are stiff and strong.  
 When alive the myriad creatures, plants and trees are supple and weak;  
 When dead they are withered and dry.  
 And so the stiff and the strong are the disciples of death;<sup>148</sup>  
 The supple and weak are the disciples of life.  
 This is why,  
     A weapon that is too strong will not prove victorious;  
     A tree that is too strong will break.  
 The strong and the mighty reside down below;  
 The soft and the supple reside on top.<sup>149</sup>

*Chapter Seventy-Seven*

The Way of Heaven, is it not like the stretching of a bow?  
 What is high it presses down;  
 What is low it lifts up.  
 It takes from what has excess;  
 It augments what is deficient.  
 The Way of Heaven takes from what has excess and augments what is  
     deficient.  
 The Way of human beings is not like this.  
 It takes from the deficient and offers it up to those with excess.  
 Who is able to offer what they have in excess to the world?  
 Only one who has the Way!  
 This is why sages act with no expectation of reward.<sup>150</sup>  
 When their work is done, they do not linger.<sup>151</sup>  
 They do not desire to make a display of their worthiness.

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<sup>148</sup>Cf. chapter 50.

<sup>149</sup>The Han dynasty commentator Wang Bi illustrates the point of these last two lines with the examples of the roots of a tree and its twigs.

<sup>150</sup>This line also appears in chapters 2, 10, and 51.

<sup>151</sup>Cf. chapters 2, 9, 17, and 34. This and the previous line also appear together in chapter 2.

*Chapter Seventy-Eight*

In all the world, nothing is more supple or weak than water;  
 Yet nothing can surpass it for attacking what is stiff and strong.  
 And so nothing can take its place.  
 That the weak overcomes the strong and the supple overcomes the hard,  
 These are things everyone in the world knows but none can practice.  
 This is why sages say,  
     Those who can take on the disgrace of the state  
     Are called lords of the altar to the soil and grain.<sup>152</sup>  
     Those who can take on the misfortune of the state,  
     Are called kings of all the world.<sup>153</sup>  
 Straightforward words seem paradoxical.

*Chapter Seventy-Nine*

In cases of great resentment, even when resolution is reached, some  
 resentment remains.  
 How can this be considered good?  
 This is why sages maintain the left-hand portion of the tally,<sup>154</sup>  
 But do not hold people accountable.  
 Those with Virtue oversee the tally;  
 Those without Virtue oversee collection.<sup>155</sup>  
 The Way of Heaven plays no favorites;  
 It is always on the side of the good.

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<sup>152</sup>These were the main altars of the state and a common metaphor for its independence and well-being.

<sup>153</sup>The idea that the most worthy rulers are willing to offer themselves to Heaven as surrogates on behalf of the people and in the name of the state is a motif seen in writings of this period and earlier. See King Tang's pronouncement to the spirits in the *Analects* 20.1 (not in this volume) and Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, especially pp. 20–24.

<sup>154</sup>The left-hand portion of a contract of obligation, the part that was held by the creditor.

<sup>155</sup>The central idea of this chapter, which is seen throughout the text, is that one cannot force others to be good. If one resorts to force, one's actions will eventually rebound in kind upon oneself. The only way to affect others and turn them to the good is through the power of one's *de*, "Virtue."

*Chapter Eighty*

Reduce the size of the state;

Lessen the population.

Make sure that even though there are labor saving tools, they are never used.

Make sure that the people look upon death as a weighty matter and never move to distant places.

Even though they have ships and carts, they will have no use for them.

Even though they have armor and weapons, they will have no reason to deploy them.

Make sure that the people return to the use of the knotted cord.<sup>156</sup>

Make their food savory,

Their clothes fine,

Their houses comfortable,

Their lives happy.

Then even though neighboring states are within sight of each other,

Even though they can hear the sounds of each other's dogs and chickens,

Their people will grow old and die without ever having visited one another.

*Chapter Eighty-One*

Words worthy of trust are not refined;

Refined words are not worthy of trust.<sup>157</sup>

The good do not engage in disputation;

Those who engage in disputation are not good.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup>That is, let them abandon writing. The use of the knotted cord to keep track of records is mentioned in the Great Appendix to the *Changes* and *Zhuangzi*, chapter 10 (not in this volume), as well as elsewhere in the early literature. The details are unclear but the practice probably entailed making a knot in a cord for every ten or twenty units counted. Thus it resembles the western practice of notching or "scoring" a piece of wood for every twenty units counted, each notch representing a "score" or twenty.

<sup>157</sup>In *Analects* 14.6 (not in this volume) Kongzi says, "Those who have *de*, 'Virtue,' will always speak well. Those who speak well will not always have Virtue." Cf. chapter 62.

<sup>158</sup>Confucians too had a general mistrust of glib talkers and disputation. This reflects their similar, though distinct, beliefs about the power of a good person's *de*, "Virtue," to sway others. For examples, see *Analects* 1.3 and Mengzi's explanation of why he must engage in disputation, though not being fond of it, found in *Mengzi* 3B9.

Those who know are not full of knowledge;

Those full of knowledge do not know.

Sages do not accumulate.

The more they do for others, the more they have;

The more they give to others the more they possess.

The Way of Heaven is to benefit and not harm.

The Way of the sage is to act but not contend.

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# Ivanhoe — The Concept of de ("Virtue") in the Laozi

Philip J. Ivanhoe

## Introduction

The earliest versions of the text attributed to the mythical Laozi<sup>1</sup> announce it as a jing ("classic") concerning two basic notions: Dao ("Way") and de ("power" or "virtue"). From the Mawangdui texts, we know that this twofold division even predates the first use of the title Daodejing. There is more general agreement about the importance and meaning of the term Dao.<sup>2</sup> But the notion of de has received remarkably little attention, in this, its Daoist locus classicus.<sup>3</sup> In the introduction to his elegantly terse translation of the Daodejing, hereafter referred to as the Laozi, D. C. Lau goes so far as to assert that in the text the term de, "is not particularly important . . ."<sup>4</sup> However, the word appears in sixteen of the text's eighty-one short chapters for a total of forty-three times.<sup>5</sup> This and the fact that it appears in the title of the earliest versions of the Laozi is prima facie evidence that the idea is central to the text's elusive message.

I will argue that an understanding of the concept of de is indispensable for a full appreciation of the philosophy presented in the Laozi and that the view of de that we find in this text shares several important characteristics with an earlier conception found in Confucius's Analects. I begin by presenting a brief account of the earlier Confucian concept of de, focusing on three characteristics. The first is the attractive power of the person with de; the second is the distinctive effect of de upon those who come into its presence; the third is the relationship between de and wuwei ("non-action") in government. After laying out the Confucian precedent, I will describe and contrast it with Laozi's notion of de. As we shall see, the Daoist notion is similar though distinct from its Confucian antecedent. I will then present a brief discussion of Zhuangzi's notion of de in light of my analysis and suggest some ways in which these different senses of de may be of interest to contemporary ethicists.

## Confucius's Conception of de

In several of my works on the early Confucian tradition, I have developed a line of argument, first advanced by David S. Nivison, concerning the role of the concept of de in Confucian ethics.<sup>6</sup> My particular interest in the early Confucian concept of de has been the role it played in the development of an ethic of self-cultivation. In summary, my view is that in early Confucian writings, de took on a genuinely ethical sense. In its general use, it retained its older meaning of the characteristic function and power of a given thing: "virtue" in the sense of the Latin *virtus*. But in the specific case of the ethically cultivated individual it came to denote what I call "moral charisma," a kind of psychological power that accrues to virtuous individuals and allows them to attract and retain the support of others. Such power was particularly important for rulers, for it enabled them to attract loyal and worthy followers; it gave them a way to legitimize a noncoercive form of government. As we are told in Analects 2.1, "One who rules through de ('moral charisma') is like the Pole Star, which remains in its

place while all the myriad stars pay homage to it." The "magnetic personality" of the ethically good person is the first characteristic feature of de we want to explore: its attractive power.

As noted above, the ability to attract and inspire people through the power of moral charisma was particularly important for the king. This view can be seen as a descendent of earlier beliefs regarding the king's unique responsibility to attract and gain the support of the spirits on behalf of the people within his state. In Confucian writings such power is thought to be characteristic of any cultivated person. For example, consider Analects 12.19, an exchange between a senior minister of the state of Lu and

Confucius, "Ji Kangzi C0253-01.gif asked Confucius about government, saying, 'How about killing those without the Way in order to advance those with the Way?' Confucius replied, 'In your administration of government, why use killing? If you just desire the good yourself, the people will be good. The de of the cultivated individual is like wind. The de of the petty person is like grass. When the wind blows upon the grass it is sure to bend.'" In this and the passage quoted earlier, we see the second characteristic feature of de: its distinctive effect upon those who come into its presence. Moral charisma influences others to yield to, support and emulate the person who has it.

This is an extremely important feature of Confucian ethical thinking. It helps explain why Confucius and Confucians in general have such faith in the power of moral example. Morally cultivated individuals are thought to "transform wherever they pass by." 7 When, in Analects 9.14, Confucius expresses a desire to go and live among the nine barbarian tribes of the East, someone objects saying, "They are so crude." Confucius responds, "Were a cultivated person to live among them, what crudeness would there be?" Those in the presence of de come under its sway and are inspired to be virtuous themselves. Confucian de invokes a kind of psychological compulsion, to respond in kind to the treatment one receives. Kindness received elicits kindness from the recipient and thereby inspires them to become more virtuous. This idea is captured in a couplet which is now found in the Book of Poetry, wu yan buchou wu de bubao C0253-02.gif ("There are no words that are left unanswered, No de ('virtue' or 'kindness') left unrepaid").8

In terms of the administration of government, the distinctive effect of de on others allows the ideal Confucian ruler to exercise his authority without ever having to order people about, much less threaten them with force. By rectifying themselves and assuming their proper ritual station, sage-kings rule, or rather reign, through wuwei ("non-action").9 Though usually associated with Daoist philosophy, the first occurrence of this phrase is in Analects 15.5, "The Master said, 'Among those who reigned through wuwei ("non-action") there was Shun! For what did he ever do? All he did was maintain himself in a dignified manner and face to the south.'" This passage illustrates the third characteristic of de mentioned earlier: the close relationship between de ("moral charisma") and wuwei ("non-action"). A person who cultivates the right kind of de develops the moral charisma which both enables him to rule and justifies him as ruler. Since people naturally respond to the example of a morally good person, such a person need not employ force or any other form of coercion in order to rule. He rules through the power of ethical authority.

## De in the Laozi

In the Laozi we see a related but significantly distinct conception of de. There are correlates to all of our three characteristics (and other similarities besides), but each of these has its own distinctive expression. For example, Laozi shared with Confucius the belief that those who possess de will attract others to them. But the attractive power of Laozi's sage differs in character from that of the Confucian. The Confucian draws people toward him through the power of his ethical excellence, which inspires similar behavior and attitudes in others. He is like the Pole Star or the windforces above the people to which they submit or defer. This explains the sense in which the properly cultivated Confucian gentleman is thought to be wei ("awe-inspiring") to behold.<sup>10</sup> Laozi's sage also draws people to him, moves them to submit or defer, and influences them to behave in certain ways. But he draws people toward him and wins their allegiance by placing himself below them, welcoming all and putting them at ease. This is why one of Laozi's central metaphors for the Way is the valley:

Know the male,

But preserve the female,

And be a canyon to the world.

If you are a canyon to the world,

Your constant de ("virtue") will never leave you . . .

Know glory,

But preserve disgrace,

And be a valley to the world.

If you are a valley to the world,

Your constant virtue will be sufficient . . .<sup>11</sup>

Putting oneself last or below others increases and perfects one's de.<sup>12</sup> Another expression of the belief that placing oneself below others draws them into one's embrace is the idea that extending unqualified love even to those who wish one ill has the power to relieve their anger and even win them over. This is why the Laozi counsels us to bao yuan yi de ("Repay resentment with kindness").<sup>13</sup> "The mother" and "the female," which are thought to conquer through "stillness," "taking the lower position," "passivity," and "compassion," are other central metaphors for this characteristically Daoist ideal.<sup>14</sup> Only one who manifests such humble, accommodating, and nurturing "virtue" can legitimately rule. For only such a person embodies in human form a dynamic witnessed throughout Nature:

The reason why the River and the Sea are able to be king  
of the hundred valleys is that they excel in taking the



lower position . . .

Therefore, desiring to rule over the people,

One must in one's words humble oneself before them;

And, desiring to lead the people,

One must, in one's person, follow behind them . . .

That is why the empire supports him joyfully and never  
tires of doing so.<sup>15</sup>

For Laozi, the draw of de is not the awesome power of the Pole Star or the wind, but the natural tendency of things to migrate down toward low, safe, and inviting, terrain. The de of the Daoist sage is welcoming, accommodating, and nurturing not awe-inspiring like that of Confucius's sage. The Daoist sage "shines but does not dazzle."<sup>16</sup> De is a power that protects all ("the sage always excels in saving people, and so abandons no one; always excels in saving things, and so abandons nothing")<sup>17</sup> and nurtures all ("The Way gives them life; Virtue rears them").<sup>18</sup> Those who possess this kind of virtue not only command the respect and allegiance of other people, all creatures in the world find them attractive, "And so among the myriad creatures, none fail to revere the Way and honor virtue. But the Way is revered and virtue honored not because of some command but because this is naturally so."<sup>19</sup>

This last passage focuses our attention on another important feature of Laozi's conception of de, one that further tends to distinguish it from that of Confucius. While the latter believed that virtue was in some sense "natural" for human beings, he also held that the particular excellences human beings manifest set them not only apart from but above other creatures. Related to this, Confucius seems to have believed that de affects people but not other creatures or things. While this last point is surely not true of all later Confucians, Confucius himself, at least as he is represented in the Analects, never talks of de affecting anything other than people. Laozi rejects this more anthropocentric understanding of de. For him the power that accrues to those who embrace the Way affects the whole world. Those who have cultivated an abundance of de "virtue" are protected from natural harms. Not only people, but other creatures as well will honor and respect their special "power."

One who possesses virtue in abundance is comparable to

a new born babe;

Poisonous insects will not sting it;

Ferocious animals will not pounce on it;

Predatory birds will not swoop down upon it.

Its bones are weak and its sinews supple yet its hold is firm . . . <sup>20</sup>

If a ruler succeeds in cultivating and maintaining such de, by "holding fast" to the Dao, his power will transform heaven and earth,

Should lords and princes be able to hold fast to it  
The myriad creatures will submit of their own accord,  
Heaven and earth will unite and sweet dew will fall,  
And the people will be equitable, though no one so decrees.<sup>21</sup>

Let us now turn to our second characteristic of de, the particular effect it is supposed to have on those who come into its presence. We have already noted that unlike Confucius's de, which affects only other people, Laozi's "mysterious virtue" influences all of the myriad creatures and even inanimate natural phenomena. While these features of Laozi's view of de are worth extensive and careful consideration, given the purposes of the present study, we will concentrate on its characteristic effects on people.

In order to grasp the special effect de is supposed to have on people, it will be helpful to offer a brief sketch of what Laozi thought were the most pervasive and profound human failings. Put simply, he believed that humans err whenever they become overly reflective and "clever." This leads them to devise all sorts of artificial ways of being and deviate from their spontaneous tendencies and natural desires. This then carries them off in a vain pursuit of social goods like power, honor, wealth, and beauty and leads them to ignore and grow cold to the simple goods and basic natural desires which are the true source of satisfaction in life. Laozi's goal is to undo this process and return to a primitive agrarian utopia of small villages. Within states composed of such villages, people will pursue lives of simple pleasures. They:

Will return to the use of the knotted rope,  
Will find relish in their food  
And beauty in their clothes,  
Will be content in their abode  
And happy in the way they live. <sup>22</sup>

In order to reach this ideal, the Daoist ruler works to undo the damage of socialization. He eliminates and discourages technological innovation or any intellectual pursuits above those needed to carry out a basic country life. The Daoist path of spiritual improvement is one of paring away or relieving unnatural, distorting, and deforming influences and ideas and restoring original vitality and health.

Therefore in governing the people, the sage empties their minds but fills their bellies, weakens their wills but strengthens their bones. He always keeps them innocent of knowledge and free from desire, and ensures that the clever never dare to act.<sup>23</sup>

Confucius's *de* seeks to draw the ethically deficient up toward the ideal example of the sage. While not everyone will be equal in their attainment of this ideal and the different social stations people occupy will require them to manifest virtue in a variety of ways, they nevertheless aspire to a common goal: becoming a *junzi* ("gentleman"). Confucius sought to educate and develop people. This is the very opposite of Laozi's model. Instead of inspiring people to strive to develop themselves, he seeks for a way to empty, unravel, and settle them. This is the only way to cure them of the malaise of inauthenticity. Thus, for Laozi *de* has what I call a "therapeutic effect" upon others. It helps to put people at ease and enables them to become aware of their inauthentic behavior and attitudes. Like bringing into a calm consciousness some repressed anger or undetected self-deception, such awareness helps the afflicted slough off the baleful influences of socialization and excessive intellectualization.

But the Daoist is not seeking a Sartrean-style authenticity, i.e., a self forged out of a series of free acts of will. Nor is the Daoist's final goal a Freudian-style "mature" awareness of the true character of one's motivations. Daoist authenticity entails allowing one's spontaneous, prereflective nature to operate unencumbered and guide one through life. The awareness of what we might call our false social self is a stage—not the final state—in a process of cultivation leading to such a life. The Daoist believes that such awareness carries off not only one's false social consciousness but any strong sense of (or need for) a self apart from the spontaneous patterns and processes of Nature. Once the reassuring ease and tranquility of the sage has relieved others of their social posturing, they will begin to unselfconsciously follow and rest in their own particular natures.

Like the natural attractiveness of the Daoist sage described earlier, this dynamic between sages and those around them is understood simply as a human analogue to a widely attested natural phenomenon. Laozi believed that whatever is "still" naturally has the *de* ("power") to settle and govern that which is agitated or restless. For example, "Restlessness overcomes cold; stillness overcomes heat. Limpid and still, One can be a leader in the empire."<sup>24</sup> The Daoist sage emulates this natural pattern of influence and response by cultivating an extremely ethereal, tenuous, and still state of mind, "Cultivate extreme tenuousness; Preserve complete stillness."<sup>25</sup> Anyone who achieves and maintains this state of peace and purity generates the special *de* ("power") to settle others as well.

If a ruler can cultivate such *de* he will be able to eliminate all strife and contention within his state. Everything will then run smoothly as each person "returns to" and pursues his or her individual task with a natural spontaneity. The ruler himself will be functioning in complete harmony with the Way, which accomplishes everything but does not self-consciously strive for any particular end. Here we see the third characteristic of *de*: the intimate relationship between *de* and *wuwei* ("non-action") in government. The ideal Daoist ruler cultivates a still and tenuous state of mind. This generates *de*, which enables him to both attract others and move them to follow the Way. This however simply entails getting them to give up all the false beliefs and artificial practices that interfere with the spontaneous functioning of their natures. There is no additional work to be done above and beyond this:

The Way always is wuwei ("without action"),  
Yet nothing ever is left undone.  
Should lords and princes be able to hold fast to it,  
The myriad creatures will be transformed of their own accord.  
. . .if I cease to desire and remain still,  
The empire will be at peace of its own accord. 26

As mentioned earlier, Confucius too believed in an ideal wuwei ("non-active") form of government which was connected to his particular understanding of de. He believed the moral charisma of a sagely ruler enables him to reign through the power of ethical authority. In order for this to lead to the state of "non-active" rule, the sage must hold the attention of the people and inspire them to develop themselves into reliable ethical agents. In a state composed of such reliable ethical agents, the sagely ruler simply goes about his particular duties and allows others to pursue their respective tasks. He need not interfere (i.e., "act") in any direct manner in the administration of his rule.

The relationship between Laozi's notion of wuwei and his conception of de shares the general structure of the Confucian precedent but is quite different. The difference is largely the result of their dissimilar views regarding the character of human nature. Laozi believed that what people really needed in order to lead a happy and contented life were the goods associated with the simple agrarian utopia described above. Artificial social goals not only do not offer any real satisfaction; they spoil any chance for a happy and contented life. The social virtues so dear to the Confucians represent the decline of the Way. For the more aware and self-conscious the people become about what constitutes "virtue," the greater the possibility for deception and hypocrisy.

There is an obvious truth to this claim: for one cannot manipulate others by feigning virtue unless one understands how to do this.

And the greater one's understanding, the greater the possibility that one with such an aim will succeed. This helps us to understand why Laozi claims that the truly virtuous person does not consciously strive to be "virtuous" (i.e., in the normal socially sanctioned sense) nor does such a person need to self-consciously act in order to achieve. The virtue and actions of the sage are spontaneous and natural: like the flowing of water or the falling of timely rain. Any hint of self-conscious design or effort is a symptom of human cleverness and artificiality.

Of course, this picture of the ideal human life assumes that in the absence of striving, people will by nature gravitate toward the noncompetitive activities of the Daoist agrarian utopia and find these fully rewarding. But if we grant these assumptions, it is then easy to see why Laozi would believe that the process of spiritual cultivation leading to this ideal involves paring away and "returning" to an original, pristine natural state. We can also more fully appreciate the difference between this ideal and the Confucian developmental model of study and reflection:

In the pursuit of learning one knows more every day; in the pursuit of the way one does less every day. One does less and less until one does nothing at all, and when one does nothing at all there is nothing that is left undone. 27

These various and related beliefs also explain why Laozi describes the rise of a self-conscious understanding of morality as tracing the decline of genuine goodness:

Those with the highest virtue are not "virtuous"

And so possess virtue.

Those with the lowest virtue never fail to be "virtuous"

And so are without virtue.

Those with the highest virtue never act

Yet nothing ever is left undone.

Those with the lowest virtue act

Yet still have things to do. . . .

And so when the Way was lost there was virtue.

When virtue was lost there was benevolence.

When benevolence was lost there was right.

When right was lost there were the rituals.

The rituals are the wearing thin of loyalty and trustworthiness

And the harbinger of chaos . . . 28

The actions of the truly virtuous arise spontaneously from their nature. They are not so much their actions as they are the Dao acting through them. Such individuals have nothing they need to do (i.e., no personal goals to pursue), but this does not mean that they are inactive. When hungry they eat, when tired they rest. In spring they plant, in autumn they harvest. They move as their nature commands, in harmony with greater rhythms, and in so doing "nothing is left undone." Such a life generates an abundance of true virtue, which enables those who possess it to live safely and in harmony with all the world and bring peace and nourishment to all who come into their presence. This is the state from which the people have fallen and back to which the de of the sagely ruler is to lead.

We have seen that for Laozi, de is the "power" or "virtue" that accrues to those who attain a peaceful, tenuous, and still state of mind. In contrast to the Confucian process of self-cultivation, which consists of prolonged study and development, a person achieves the Daoist ideal by paring away the influences of socialization and intellectualization and "turning back" to a simple, agrarian way of life. Daoist de welcomes, accommodates, pacifies, and nurtures all who come into its presence. And so all

creatures find it attractive and worthy of reverence. The primary effect of Daoist de on other people is therapeutic and purgative. The natural simplicity and contentment of the sage helps others to recognize and shed the artificial beliefs and practices that deform and interfere with their original, spontaneous nature. The Laozi claims even greater power for "mysterious virtue," for its influence extends out to all creatures and even affects the rain and dew.

The power of de enables the ideal Daoist ruler to rule through wuwei ("non-action"). While Confucian rulers can rule through a related form of wuwei it is different from what we see in the Laozi. The de of the Confucian ruler allows him to attract and retain likeminded subordinates who join and are inspired by him to realize the ideal Confucian society. The force of his virtue is very much centripetal, drawing people in and up in a common cause. The de of the Daoist ruler also allows him to rule over a peaceful and flourishing country but he relies upon a different dynamic. His virtue relieves the tensions within his state, which are generated by the artificial desires foisted upon his people through the insidious influence of socialization and human "cleverness." This allows them to return to those pursuits that represent their genuine or natural desires: the life found in scattered, simple agricultural villages. The force of the de of Laozi's sage is very much centrifugal. It turns people away from those social goods, the "goods hard to come by," 29 which lead to competition, contention, and strife. It puts people at ease, brings them peace and allows them to settle down where they are. To "find relish in their food . . . beauty in their clothes, (to) be content in their abode, And happy in the way they live."

## **De in the Zhuangzi**

The concept of de is by no means restricted to the two texts that have served as the focus of the present study. Though it is not emphasized by most interpreters, it is of considerable importance in texts like the Zhuangzi as well. For example, in the fifth chapter, "The Sign of Virtue Complete," we find characters such as Aitai Tuo , who is described as quande zhi ren ("one of perfect virtue").<sup>30</sup> Aitai Tuo is a terribly ugly man who appears to be without any remarkable gifts or skills. And yet, "When men were around him, they thought only of him . . . and when women saw him they ran begging to their fathers and mothers, saying, 'I'd rather be this man's concubine than another man's wife!'"<sup>31</sup> We also are told that when summoned to court, Aitai Tuo quickly won the favor of Duke Ai of Lu, who wanted to entrust him with the administration of his entire kingdom. In this story we see the first of our three cardinal characteristics of de: its attractive power.

An earlier story in the same chapter illustrates our second characteristic of de: its effect on those who come within its presence. This story concerns Shentu Jia , a man who had lost a foot as punishment for an undisclosed crime. Through study with a Daoist master, he had learned to accept his fate, something we are told only a "man of virtue" can do. At one point, Shentu Jia describes the effect his master has had upon him, "There were many with two feet who laughed at me for having only one, which would whip me into a rage. But when I reached the Master's place, my anger dissipated and I would return home. I do not know how he washed me clean with goodness." <sup>32</sup> Here we see a poignant illustration of what earlier I called the "therapeutic effect" of Daoist virtue.

In these and other stories, Zhuangzi dramatically emphasizes the separation of true virtue and outward form. His sages are highly imperfect and undesirable from the point of view of society. But,

like the sage described by Confucius and Laozi, Zhuangzi's exemplars have a spiritual "power" that arises from their special character. Aitai Tuo draws people to him and relieves them of their cramped, socially sanctioned opinions of what is attractive and who would make a good minister. Shentu Jia's master stills the boiling rage within him.

Zhuangzi's notion of de is very much like Laozi's in being primarily "therapeutic" in its effect. But in at least one way it is more like that of Confucius than his fellow Daoist. For both Zhuangzi and Confucius, other people are attracted to the sage as an individual. The sage we encounter in the Laozi—like the text itself—is anonymous.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps of greater importance, Zhuangzi's concept of de differs from either of our other two thinkers in having no direct connection with a theory of government through wuwei. Those with virtue—including Zhuangzi himself—are on several occasions offered control of the government, but they always turn away from these offers, often mocking such proposals.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, while such a direct "use" of virtue is explicitly denied, there is a clear sense that one with great virtue is preserved from natural harms, as was the case in the Laozi. In chapter 1, we find the following description of the Holy or Spiritual Man:

This man with this de "virtue," is about to embrace the ten thousand things and roll them into one. Though the age calls for reform, why should he wear himself out over the affairs of the world? There is nothing that can harm this man. Though flood waters pile up to the sky, he will not drown. Though a great drought melts metal and stone and scorches the earth and hills, he will not be burned . . .<sup>35</sup>

A full account of Zhuangzi's concept of virtue is beyond the range of the present study. The preceding examples and observations are intended only to provide some evidence of the pervasiveness, importance, and richness of the concept of de among early Chinese philosophers. This is a topic worthy of sustained and careful study.

Beyond the importance the concept of de holds for our understanding of traditional Chinese thought is its potential to contribute to contemporary philosophical discussions, particularly in the field of virtue ethics. Contemporary Western philosophers, even those who work on the issues of character and the virtues, do not have anything quite like the Chinese notion that we have been exploring. <sup>36</sup> We tend to talk about virtue in the sense of various excellences of character not as a power that can affect others, arising from the possession of such excellences. Our attention has been focused, and often with good results, on the characteristics of various human excellences and how they fit together in a picture of human flourishing. We have not seriously considered how the example of such good people might affect the ethical lives of those around them and the communities in which they live. Such consideration might lead us to appreciate additional dimensions of value in traditional virtues.

## Conclusion

We have described two different notions of de, each of which points to real and important aspects of what we might call interpersonal moral psychology. The Confucian notion of de as moral charisma is a phenomenon familiar to many people. Morally excellent people, e.g., a Gandhi or a King, draw people to them and are inspiring and uplifting. This makes perfectly good sense. An important part of what it is for something to be a virtue, in the sense of a human excellence, is that it attracts,

inspires, and uplifts human beings. And most people, at least within a common community, understand enough of what makes virtue virtuous to feel some attraction to those who possess it in abundance.

The Daoist "therapeutic" understanding of virtue is equally illuminating. Once removed from its more dramatic metaphysical foundations, the core sense of Daoist *de* is not at all unknown to us though like moral charisma genuine cases of it are quite rare (which is part of what makes it so valuable). In the presence of those who are at peace with themselves, who are humble and who are open to and caring of others, we can find the beginning of a cure for some of our deepest, self-inflicted wounds. People who accept us as we are (no matter how bad we might be) and offer reassurance and support, perhaps even love, create a psychological space for profound self-understanding and transformation. The experience of being in the presence of a person with such "virtue" can result in a greater awareness of how much of our attention and energy is dedicated to maintaining various social masks, defensive postures, and outright self-deceptions. Reflected in the stillness of such individuals we have the chance to see ourselves and our society more clearly and perhaps even alter the way we perceive and act in the world. 37

## Notes

I want to thank Bryan W. Van Norden, Paul Kjellberg, Mark Csikszentmihalyi, and Ted Slingerland for helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this essay.

1. I will use the name of the mythical author of the text in order to facilitate my presentation. I think there was no such person and that the text is clearly a composite, cobbled together by some third century B.C.E. editor. Nevertheless, there was someone who at some point brought these various passages together and fashioned them into a single text. Extending my original analogy, there was a cobbler and as cobblers make shoes (even from scraps of leather) editors make coherent texts (even with passages from disparate sources). So referring to an author (in the sense of a creator) of the text seems well warranted. I see nothing wrong with calling him or her "Laozi" (lit., "The Old Master").

2. This is evident from the simple fact that almost every translator of the text renders the term as "Way." There is some disagreement as to the exact sense in which it is understood as a "transcendent" principle underlying the observable phenomena of the world. These disagreements strike me as more concerned with the particular metaphysics one sees in the text, specifically the existence or strength of dualism. But in almost every case, the Dao is understood as the underlying and unifying pattern beneath the play of events. The one dramatic exception to this generalization is Chad Hansen, who understands the Dao as something akin to "discourse." The point of the text then is to deny that there is any universal principle or pattern underlying the phenomena of the world. All we have are various linguistic schemes for carving up the world. See for example his *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 196-230.



3. The one notable exception to this is Roger Ames's essay, "Putting the Te Back into Taoism," in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 113-144. As best as I can tell, Ames's view is radically different from my own. He seems to regard *de* as a metaphysical feature of all living phenomena. For example, he says that *de*, "denotes the arising of the particular in a process vision of existence" (125). He further claims that it unifies all particular phenomena in a way reminiscent of Huayan Buddhism, "any particular *de* when viewed in terms of its intrinsic relatedness entails the full process of existence . . ." (128).

4. D. C. Lau, *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (Rpt., London: Penguin Books, 1974), 42.

5. This number will vary slightly depending on which version of the text one takes as authoritative.

6. The most complete account of Nivison's views on *de* can be found in Bryan W. Van Norden, ed. *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy*, (La Salle: Open Court Press, 1996): 17-57. My understanding of the concept can be found in my *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 1-7.

7. Mencius 7A13. Cf. 7B25. Similar lines occur in chapters 15 and 32 of the *Xunzi*. Donald Munro provides a remarkably thorough and insightful account of the role moral exemplars play in Chinese thought. See his *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969).

8. Mao # 256. For a complete translation and the context of these lines, see James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4 (Rpt., Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970), 514.

9. Herrlee G. Creel is the first to comment on the Confucian examples of *wuwei*. His analysis differs from the one presented here but contains a wealth of examples and insights on this important concept. See "On the Origin of Wu-wei" in *What is Taoism?* (Rpt., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 48-78. An illuminating and more recent discussion of *wuwei* can be found in Schwartz's treatment of Daoism. See Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 186-254.

10. For examples, see Analects 1.8, 7.38 and 20.2 (2X). For a passage that evokes the awe-inspiring majesty of the gentleman with another metaphor that places him "above" the people (like the sun or the wind), see Analects 19.21.

11. Chapter 28. My translation. For other examples of the image of the valley, see chapters 6, 15, 39, and 41. See also the image of water in chapter 8, "Highest good is like water. Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the way" (Lau, Lao Tzu, 64).

12. The idea that putting oneself beneath or humbling oneself before another increases one's *de* is a very old notion. In his discussion of an oracle bone inscription dating from around 1200 B.C.E. David S. Nivison describes how a Shang King puts himself beneath or at risk before the spirits. Nivison says, "In this rite in which the king as diviner-intermediary assists another person to get well . . . because of his willingness to put himself in danger on behalf of another, his *de*, 'virtue,' is magnified." See "'Virtue' in Bronze and Bone," in *The Ways of Confucianism*, ed. Van Norden, chapter three. The same dynamic can be seen in chapter 20 of the Analects. There we see King Tang pronounce to the spirits, "If I in my own person do any wrong, let it never be visited upon the many lands. But if anywhere in the many lands wrong is done, let it be visited upon my person" (Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius* [New York: Vintage Books, 1938], 231).

13. Chapter 63. In Analects 14.36 this line is discussed. There Confucius rejects it and instead suggests one: "Repay resentment with uprightness and kindness with kindness." Compare these different teachings to the lines from the Book of Poetry quoted above.

14. For examples of the image of the mother, see chapters 1, 20, 25, 52, 59. For the image of the "female," see chapters 10 and 28.

15. Chapter 66; Lau, Lao Tzu, p. 128. See also chapter 32. Cf. chapter 7, "the sage puts his person last and it comes first, Treats it as extraneous to himself and it is preserved" (Lau, Lao Tzu, 63).

16. Chapter 58; Lau, Lao Tzu, 119.

17. Chapter 27; Lau, Lao Tzu, 84.

18. Chapter 51; Lau, Lao Tzu, 112.

19. Chapter 51; My translation.

20. Chapter 55; Lau, Lao Tzu, 116.

21. Chapter 32; Lau, Lao Tzu, 91.

22. Chapter 80; Lau, Lao Tzu, 142.

23. Chapter 3; Lau, Lao Tzu, 59. Cf. chapter 12 "the sage is for the belly, Not for the eye" (Lau, Lao Tzu, 68).

24. Chapter 45; Lau, Lao Tzu, 106. See also chapter 26, "The still is the lord of the restless" (Lau, Lao Tzu, 83).

25. Chapter 16. My translation.

26. Chapter 37; Adapted from Lau, Lao Tzu, 96. Cf. chapter 32 quoted above.

27. Chapter 48; Adapted from Lau, Lao Tzu, 109. See also the idea that the basic movement of the Dao is "turning back," chapters, 14, 16, 25, 40, 52, etc.

28. Chapter 38. My translation.

29. For this expression, see chapters 3, 12, and 64.

30. My translation. A complete translation of the story can be found in Burton Watson, trans., *Chuang Tzu: The Complete Works* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 70-71.

31. Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, 72.

32. My translation. Both Watson and Graham have added a line immediately after the translated section which does not appear in the original and which changes the sense of the passage. Watson has, "I don't know whether he washes me clean with goodness or whether I come to understand things by myself." Graham has, "I do not know whether it is the Master cleansing me by his goodness or my own self-awakening." (Italics mine in both quotes.) See A. C. Graham, trans., *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), 78. They both appear to be following the commentary of Guo Xiang, who glosses the original line to this effect.

33. But even in this regard, the similarity with Confucius's sage is not complete. For Confucius most often holds up historical exemplars while Zhuangzi's sages are clearly literary creations. In a way, Zhuangzi's exemplars stand somewhere in between those of Confucius and Laozi.

34. One of the most delightful examples of this kind of story concerns Zhuangzi fishing in the Pu River. See Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, 187-188.

35. Adapted from Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, 33.

36. In some earlier traditions within the West, the idea that one can be transformed by the virtue of another is evident and important. Of particular note in this regard is the notion of Platonic Love as seen in works such as Plato's *Symposium* or Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

37. In his profound and disturbing account of wartime experiences, J. Glenn Gray describes his chance encounter with an old Italian hermit who embodies many of the qualities I have tried to describe here as Daoist "virtue." Glenn tells us, "there was about him a rare peaceableness and sanity . . . I felt in him the strength of his close association with the things of nature . . . he seemed to possess a constancy, patience and endurance not often known . . ." See *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*, (Rpt., New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 240-241. See also 18-21.