



*The giant statue of Laozi,
located north of Quanzhou
Fujian province, China*

Laozi

DAODE JING

Lao Tzu

TAO TE CHING

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INTRODUCTION

This new translation of the *Daode jing* develops the experiment in translation that was initiated in 2004 in the version of Matsuo Bashō's *Oku no hosomichi [The Narrow Road to the Far North]*. Since both translations have a common starting point, it is worth rehearsing briefly the source of the experiment.

One of the most compelling accounts of poetry I heard as an undergraduate student was a reading by Christopher Logue from what was then his recently published translation of Book 16 of Homer's *Iliad*. Logue's version sounded with an enormous, visceral power. It leapt, twisted, invented, clashed, modernised, contorted, visualised – in ways that made all other translations of the poem seem staid and bland. Since then, it has become clear that this dramatic and verbal energy was no isolated *tour de force* by a young poet. Forty four years later, Logue's radical approach to translating the poem (*All Day Permanent Red*, 2003, a rendering of the first battle scenes in Books 5-8) retains all of its earlier power to wrench and dislocate the original into a contemporary poetic idiom. There is, however, one aspect of the translation that, then as now, is likely at the very least to bemuse, if not actually to shock. Logue cannot read ancient Greek, not a word of it. He has created his *Iliad* by consulting already existing renderings, developing a sense of what the original is saying, and then taking off to create his own version. In the words of one reviewer, on the surface at least 'it's like learning of a deaf man who prepared himself to conduct Stravinsky by watching *Fantasia*'.

However quixotic or foolish Logue's task may seem, though, the unquestionable power and richness of the result raises a fundamental question: to what extent, if any, is it possible to translate from a language of which one has little or no knowledge? Is it simply impossible? Or will such a version have to rely upon so many extraneous aids (numerous other translations, massive resort to commentaries and dictionaries, constant oversight by native speakers of the original language, and so forth) as to drown any individual voice in what will be essentially the translation of a collective? If these supports are not available, will such a text inevitably have to be loose paraphrase or imitation or re-composition

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because the complex connotations of the original cannot be understood? Or may there be some means by which all these barriers can be surmounted, and the original text presented in a close, faithful and resonant way?

This avowedly experimental translation of the *Daode jing* raises all of the questions mentioned above; and while it may not answer all of them, it attempts at least to scrutinise, test and explore them. The personal journey may be worth describing briefly. At the very beginning of drafting the translation, I knew not a word of Chinese. I had for years been interested in the text of the *Daode jing*, and had read widely in the more than a hundred translations into English that had appeared since the middle of the 19th century. And the work's momentousness had long been known, as one of the central statements in world religion and philosophy that had survived for well over two millennia. But of the language in which it was written, I knew nothing.

Such ignorance might seem problematic enough in a translation from a contemporary European language with a similar script and basic structure. But from a language well over two thousand years old, and with a demonstrably different script and structure, the ignorance might seem insurmountable. Even a cursory reading in ancient Chinese is enough to highlight quite radical differences between it and English. As has been widely recognised, ancient Chinese is a conceptual rather than a perceptual language. Whereas the perceptual languages of the Western world identify issues of time (past, present, future), of number (singular, plural), of person (subject or object; or first, second and third person), of part of speech (noun, verb, adjective), ancient Chinese does none of this. The characters of the *Daode jing* are uninflected. They do not offer any differentiation between singular and plural, between definite and indefinite articles, or between nouns, verbs and adjectives. There are no tenses, and little apart from context to distinguish subject from object. These uncertainties are exacerbated by the omission of pronoun subjects (he/she/you/it), and of connectives, conjunctions, and copulas (and/but/when/whilst/is/are). Visual clues to structure and meaning (such as punctuation, capitalisation, paragraphing) are minimal or non-existent. And the text can be written either vertically or horizontally, or can be romanised according to two different systems (offering either the traditional Wade-Giles, or the more modern *pinyin*, spellings and implied pronunciations [see section on transliteration]). In combination, all these features might seem to make for a total impenetrability – a language rooted in paradox and ambiguity, able to be interpreted in a number of

different ways, and understandable, if at all, only after a lifetime's immersion.

The *Daode jing*, however, tightens the screw even more than this. Whether interpreted as a book of religious teachings, or a political or sociological treatise, or a personal philosophical guide, it has the shape of a loosely gathered anthology rather than of a clearly structured text. It seems not so much to evolve as to revolve. The 81 sections into which it is conventionally organised present, not only a highly terse and compressed utterance, but also jump without warning between what seem unconnected ideas, themes, or images. To take a single example, section 27 presents five distinct ideas:

- i) skill, achievement, or excellence, do not rely upon conventional attributes;
- ii) 'therefore', people who are enlightened care for the whole of the animate and inanimate universe;
- iii) this is known as following the Light;
- iv) 'therefore', the nature of teaching is paradoxical;
- v) this is a fundamental lesson of the DAO.

Despite the attempt to create some sort of connectedness by the characters *yi* and *gu* (meaning 'therefore/hence/and so'), they paradoxically serve only to heighten the separations between the five ideas. In passages like this, the effect created often seems at best aphoristic, at worst cryptic beyond all penetration. More even than this, the *Daode jing* repeats a number of crucial terms, which stretch the very nature of language to breaking-point and beyond. As the celebrated first six characters of the text state, if indeed the very nature of the *dao* is that it cannot be expressed in language, what word or sign could ever be its signifier?

Given this overall context, there are two related ways in which the challenge of translating the *Daode jing* has been taken up, and each is worth developing in a little detail:

other translations

Since the first translation of the *Daode jing* into English in 1868, well over a hundred versions of the entire work have been published, of which at least a quarter are currently [2005] available. As the drafting began, ten

of these versions were chosen for particularly detailed scrutiny, and placed alongside each other at every step of the way. Such collation allowed two contrasting features to emerge: the lowest common denominators that some, many, or all the versions shared, but also the differences in diction, phrasing, and tone between them. Consider, for instance, a collation of the final eight characters of the first section. In *pinyin* romanisation, they read:

*xuan zhi you xuan
zhong miao zhi men*

Ten versions from the last half-century translate these characters as follows:

Mystery upon mystery –
The gateway of the manifold secrets

Deeper and more profound,
The door of all subtleties

Profoundly and profoundly it is the entrance
From which come all wonders

Darkness within darkness,
The gate to all mystery

Mystery of mystery, the door to inwardness

Darkness within darkness,
The gateway to all understanding

the Profundity of the Profound,
the Gate of the Collective Subtlety

Mystery upon Mystery
The womb giving birth to all of being

It is the path to all wonder,
the gate to the essence of everything!

Profound upon profound, it is the portal to all intricacies

The shared denominators here can be readily identified:

door/gate/gateway/entrance/portal
 deep/profound/dark
 darkness/mystery/secret
intensification (darkness *within* darkness, profound *upon*
 profound)
universalisation (*all* wonders, *all* understanding)

These common features, however, can resonate very differently. It is not simply that ostensible synonyms (door/gate/gateway/portal) vary considerably in connotation, but that the context in which they are placed differs quite radically from one translation to another. In these ten versions, the doors/gates/portals lead to

the manifold secrets
 all subtleties
 all wonders
 all mystery
 inwardness
 all understanding
 Collective Subtlety
 all of being
 the essence of everything
 all intricacies

Although some of these phrases may seem to evoke a similar general entity or condition, they may evoke, much more, substantial differences in reading. Are ‘all intricacies’ (and what are they?) *really* similar to ‘all wonders’? Is ‘inwardness’ *really* similar to ‘all of being’? Is the capitalised ‘Collective Subtlety’ (and what does that mean?) *really* similar to ‘all understanding’?

Such analysis of both the common and the individual features in different translations soon brings to light the strengths and weaknesses of each. Misleading connotation here; needlessly obscurantist diction there. Resonant phrasing here; natural, unforced cadence there. And as word is compared with word, phrase with phrase, a growing judgment develops, both conscious and intuitive, about what the Chinese original is saying, and about how it can best be translated into English.

word-for-word translations

In addition to the general support provided by the many translations above, there is a further resource: word-for-word versions that present each Chinese character against an English equivalent at every step of the way. Sometimes, only one English equivalent is provided. Sometimes, and much more valuably, a listing of synonyms is provided that evokes the shades of meaning either present or implied in the original. A single example will show how useful such juxtaposition can be:

<i>Pinyin romanisation</i>	English equivalents
shan	good / excellent / skilful / one adept at / well-
xing	traveller / walker / runner / to step / to go / travelling / walking / path
wu	no / without / ^ [leaves] no
zhe	track / rut / wheel ruts
ji	trace / footprints / hoofprints <i>or</i> vestiges / results
shan	good / excellent / skilful / one adept at / well-
yan	speaker / speech / words / talking
wu	no / without / ^ [leaves / makes / reveals] no
xia	flaw / blemish / slip-ups / imperfection ^ [for / for finding]
zhe	error / attack / reproach
shan	good / excellent / skilful / one adept at / well-
shu	counters / counting / reckoner / accountant / calculation / analysis / plan
bu	no / not / without / does not
yong	use / utilise / make use of
chou	counting / tally / calculate / counter
ce	bamboo slips / counting rods / calculator

This illustration, the details of which are derived in large part from Jonathan Star’s excellent edition of the *Daode jing* [see *Further Reading*

and Links], comprises the opening of section 27. What such a listing of synonyms valuably provides is a sense of the connotative *range* that resonates around each Chinese character. Sometimes, the range seems relatively narrow, as with the synonyms for *yong*: ‘use / utilise / make use of’. Sometimes, it is much wider, as with ‘counters / counting / reckoner / accountant / calculation / analysis / plan’ as possible interpretations of *shu*. But always, each cluster of synonyms marks out the field of reference within which the translator must choose the most telling English equivalent.

the present translation

On these foundations and resources, the present translation has been built; and it is worth identifying now its major features:

conciseness and expansiveness

The standard edition of the *Daode jing* comprises approximately 5,280 characters, all of them monosyllabic in sound, and almost all of them evoking a sense of terse, compacted utterance. An immediate question for any translator is whether to strive for a similar compression in English, even if such compression sometimes leads to ambiguity or obscurity, or whether to allow verbal expansions upon the original where meaning would be helpfully clarified. The range of response to this question can be well illustrated by the number of English words that nine translators use to render section 1. The Chinese original comprises 59 characters.

John Heider (1985)	189	(+ 220%)
Stan Rosenthal (1984)	165	(+ 180%)
Tormond Byrn (1997)	161	(+ 173%)
Jonathan Star (2001)	135	(+ 128%)
D.C. Lau (rev. 1989)	95	(+ 61%)
Peter Merel (1995)	86	(+ 46%)
John C.H. Wu (1961)	82	(+ 39%)
Stephen Hodge (2002)	81	(+ 37%)
Stephen Addis and Stanley Lombardo (1993)	57	(– 4%)

The contrasts here between three different approaches are very marked. The large number of words for the first group cannot, I think, be

interpreted as anything other than a desire to elaborate upon the original text – whether to clarify or paraphrase its meaning, or to contemporise its references, or to explain its implications and obscurities. The number of words in the second group might largely be accounted for by the simple need to add in English those inflexions, connectives, conjunctions, pronouns, and so forth, omitted in the Chinese. The fact that the third group actually uses two *fewer* words than in the original reveals the desire to capture the staccato rhythms and terse diction of the original, even if the result may sometimes be cryptic in expression.

In this version, I have aimed for the terseness of the third group (valuing for instance Anglo-Saxon monosyllables before Latinate polysyllables), but in an intelligible and resonant English that corresponds to the effect of the second group. The 5,280 characters of the original are translated here into approximately 7,720 words (+ 46%), a proportion similar to that of the second group. I have not sought to paraphrase or explain or expand upon the original text, but rather to translate it – and in a spare yet cadenced language. In other words, the translation aims for a simplicity of utterance, recognising nevertheless that there are occasions when nothing is more cryptic than simplicity.

connectedness

The problems created by the disconnections in a number of sections have already been identified. Sometimes, the jumps between different ideas are small, but sometimes they present demonstrable illogicalities. Previous translations have often tried to blur the disjunctures by keeping to the same tense or perspective throughout the verse, by adding connective material, and especially by inserting words such as ‘hence’, ‘therefore’, ‘thus’, ‘and so’, ‘that is why’. In this version, however, I have chosen to avoid such false connectedness, and to present separate sayings *as* separate. Real incongruity, in other words, has been preferred to contrived cohesiveness.

gender

As noted already, ancient Chinese has no personal pronouns to distinguish between ‘he’ and ‘she’, ‘him’ and ‘her’, ‘his’ and ‘hers’. Previous translations have responded to this issue in four different ways: by retaining a male-biased language throughout, by substituting a female-biased language throughout, by disconcertingly jumping from male to female in each successive section of the text, or by seeking a gender-neutral language, whether through pluralisation (‘they’, ‘them’ and ‘those’ rather than ‘he’ and ‘she’) or generic terms such as ‘people’ and ‘humanity’ (rather than ‘men’ and ‘mankind’). It is this last option that

the present translation follows. What gender-neutral language creates is a universality of reference. These are not words addressed to *men* at a particular time, but to *all* people and for *all* times.

stylistic patterns

A notable feature of the *Daode jing* is the frequent use it makes of parallelism, antithesis, repetition, and paradox. Section 64 provides a good example of all four features in operation:

qi an yi chi
qi wei zhao yi mou
qi cui yi pan
qi wei yi san
 ...
mu sheng yu hao mo
jiu ceng zhi tai
qi yu lei tu
qian li zhi xing
shi yu zu xia

(repetition of *qi* [that, what, things] and *yi* [easy]; parallel word order; contrast between *mu* [tree] and *mo* [seed]; paradox of *qian li* [a thousand miles] starting with *zu* [a single step]).

This kind of patterning permeates the entire text, and is not difficult to render into English. Once the choice of phrase-shape or word-contrast has been made, all that is needed is to ensure that it is consistently applied. And so the Chinese text above can be rendered as

It is easy to hold on to things at rest;
 it is easy to plan for things not yet seen;
 it is easy to shatter things that are fragile;
 it is easy to scatter things that are small.

...

A tree as big as one's embrace grows from a tiny shoot;
 a tower nine storeys high rises from a heap of earth;
 a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.

There is one other kind of patterning, however, that is almost impossible to reproduce – and that is the sound of the ancient Chinese rhymes. Indeed, it may come as a surprise to many readers of the *Daode jing* to learn that more than half the text rhymes, although there is no single dominant pattern. Often, the rhymed passages are closely integrated with

the unrhymed parts. The very fact, though, that only *one* English translation from over a hundred attempts to reproduce the rhymes indicates its practical impossibility. The obscurities of meaning discussed earlier would almost certainly be made even more impenetrable if further constrained by the need to find rhyming words. There is, nonetheless, one element of sound that I have tried to maintain: a persuasive rhythm and sense of cadence, often based upon an iambic metre. The quality of natural, unforced voice that is created valuably highlights the oral traditions from which the *Daode jing* derives, and emphasises that it is a text as much to be spoken out aloud as read silently.

historical reference and image

The *Daode jing* is different from much early Chinese philosophical writing in that it is entirely free from a narrative that identifies particular people or particular places or particular times. It presents, rather, general statements that have universal and timeless applicability. In the translation, I have tried to reproduce this kind of universalisation faithfully; and no attempt has been made to modernise or contemporise images and references. To take a single illustration, section 46 draws a contrast between a good, peace-loving country, where *que zou ma yi fen* [galloping horses fertilise the fields], and a destructive realm, where *rong ma sheng yu jiao* [horses for war breed in the countryside]. Recognising the historical distance created by such imagery, one recent version substitutes equivalent modern images. When a country is productive, 'factories make trucks and tractors'; when destructive, 'warheads are stockpiled outside the cities'. This kind of modernisation may make certain images more accessible to a modern reader, but it is at the cost of localising what is universal, of westernising unduly ancient Chinese points of reference. And so here I have sought to maintain the *difference* of the *Daode jing* as well as its universality. Cultural references that place the text in ancient China (swords, gold, jade, *yin*, *yang*, wild buffalo, bows, emperor) have been retained. Where their meaning might be difficult to understand, an explanatory NOTE has been added.

translatability and untranslatability

By far the most imponderable aspect of translating the *Daode jing* are those crucial terms, repeated throughout the text, that stretch the very nature of language to breaking-point. In terms of the increasing problems they raise for the translator, five are worth discussing: *wan wu*, *sheng ren*, *wu wei*, *te*, and *tao*:

wan wu

these characters, which occur 21 times in the text, literally mean ‘[the] ten thousand things’, or ‘the myriad creatures’, and are thus rendered in many translations. But ‘ten thousand things’ and ‘myriad creatures’, particularly when prefaced with the definite article, seem likely to cause more perplexity than clarity for English-speaking readers. *What* or *which* ten thousand things, *what* or *which* myriad creatures? And doesn’t *myriad* have a rather ‘poetic’, rhetorical, even archaic, ring? The basic meaning of the words is ‘all living things’, ‘all life’, ‘the whole of creation’; and these are the phrases by which *wan wu* is translated here.

sheng ren

the phrase occurs over thirty times in the text, *sheng* basically meaning ‘holy’ or ‘saintly’, and *ren* meaning ‘man’, woman’ or ‘person’. The phrase has been rendered in various ways:

Holy man
Sacred person
Sage
Ideal Sage
Perfected Sage
Enlightened Being
Perfect Being
Perfect Man
Realised Being
Saint
Master
Man of Calling
Evolved Individuals

None of these translations, however, seems satisfactory. Some signal a clear bias of gender (‘Man’, ‘Master’), while others generate an incongruous register (‘sage’ in contemporary English, for instance, evokes far more a light, ironic connotation than anything substantial or serious). Some versions suggest an undue Western focus (for example, ‘saint’, with its inescapably Christian associations), while others produce cumbersome, almost opaque renderings (‘Realised Being’, ‘Evolved Individuals’). In the light of these translations, I render *sheng ren* as

those who have attained enlightenment

The rendering may, perhaps, seem slightly ‘wordy’ (five words against one or two); but it is also non-sexist, weighty without being ponderous,

and places a proper emphasis upon the progress towards an *Eastern* religious goal: the *attaining* of *enlightenment*.

wu wei

these two characters can be literally translated as *wu* = non- / empty / without, and *wei* = action / doing / activity / effort. Together, they express a central concept in Daoism: the significance of ‘non-action’. The difficulty here is more one of alien connotation than of literal denotation, because ‘non-action’ does not imply ‘not doing anything’ or ‘being idle’ or ‘avoiding the things one ought to do’. *Wu wei* is in fact action, but action without any sense of ownership or ego or selfhood, action without any attachment to its results, action that is so much in accord with the universe that all human deeds are the actions of the universe itself. I try to convey the affirmative sense of the phrase, rather than any negativity, whenever it occurs.

de

with this term, one of three in the title of the text, the beginnings of untranslatability become evident. The character has been variously translated as ‘virtue’, ‘truth’, ‘moral force’, ‘power’, ‘integrity’, ‘flawlessness’, ‘perfection’, ‘perfect-heartedness’; but abstract nouns like these poorly convey the dynamic behind the word. *Te* is all of these things, but it is also the *manifestation, realisation and expression* of them – enacted in one place, one form, one action, one revelation. And so the sense of the character is not so much ‘perfect-heartedness’ as ‘perfect-hearted action’, not so much ‘flawlessness’ as ‘the flawless expression of the heart’. Moreover, *de* has a further meaning: it is *quidditas* (‘whatness’), the essence that gives each thing its unique characteristics, that makes it what it is and not another thing. And so the word has not only ethical, human connotations (‘virtue’, ‘integrity’, and so forth) but also profound philosophical connotations (the quiddity of things). Given all these complexities, *de* is one of only two words in the text that it has seemed best to leave untranslated.

dao

the other word is, of course, *dao* itself. Earlier attempts to render the character have included ‘the Absolute’, ‘the Eternal’, ‘the One’, ‘God’, ‘the Way’, ‘Supreme Reality’, ‘the Mind’, as well as the literal meaning of ‘path’, ‘way’, or ‘road’. But every attempt to express *dao* in words is naturally self-defeating. If the very nature of the *dao* is that it cannot be expressed in language, that it is attributeless, what word or sign could ever be its signifier? It is not simply that there is no English equivalent for *dao*, but that there is no Chinese equivalent either. In a very real

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sense, *dao* is untranslatable even into Chinese. The closest equivalent might be ‘xxxxxxx’, or ‘0’ (zero-ness), or simply ‘ ’ (a blank space). After considering all these possibilities, however, *dao* has been chosen as the term which best evokes the unnameable essence without naming it.

conclusion

Whether this translation of Laozi’s *Daode jing* has proved or disproved the possibility of translating from a language of which one has little or no knowledge, is for individual readers to determine. The best judges, presumably, will be those readers who are totally bi-lingual, as sensitive to every register and nuance of classical Chinese as they are of contemporary English. For myself, I began drafting the translation even more sceptical than at the start of Bashō’s *Oku no hosomichi*. Without even a basic narrative line to anchor any direction or meaning, I thought it would be impossible to render the *Daode jing* coherently and resonantly. And yet a translation has emerged and is here. At the beginning of this introduction, I quoted the words of one reviewer about Christopher Logue’s version of the *Iliad*: ‘it’s like learning of a deaf man who prepared himself to conduct Stravinsky by watching *Fantasia*’. My final position, I hope, may be of a partially hearing man who prepared himself to conduct Stravinsky by discovering, at least, how to read a musical score.

Tim Chilcott
October 2005

CHRONOLOGY

between 7th and 2nd centuries BCE text is gradually formed, different parts of it passing orally and then in writing through numerous anonymous speakers and scribes. As the work evolves, parts are added, taken away, mistranscribed, lost, re-interpreted, in a constant process of development by different contributors. The most likely period for the assembly of the text is generally considered to be the late fourth or early third century BCE.

circa 500 BCE a legendary account speaks of one Laozi [Lao Tsu], who was keeper of the royal archives in the state of Chou in the lower Yangtze valley. His counsel is said to have been sought by the younger Confucius (551–479 BCE). Finally disenchanted by the decline of Chou, Laozi sets out westward to leave the place for ever when he is asked by the guardian of the Western pass, Yin Hsi, to leave some written expression of his thinking, which he does at one sitting. He then crosses the frontier, never to be heard of again. This account, first recorded at the beginning of the first century BCE, has remained popular, but is almost certainly apocryphal, not least in the ascribed authorship of the *Daode jing* to a single, named writer rather than an unnamed collective.

1st century CE the division of the material into two books (the *Dao jing* and the *De jing*) and into 81 sections probably occurs during this period.

before 249 CE a precocious young scholar, Wang Bi [Wang Pi] (226–49 CE), writes a commentary on the *Daode jing*, which includes a copy of the text, presumably the most authoritative version available at the time. This

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text remains the standard version today. Two other texts recently found at Mawangdui are of an earlier date (206 BCE) and interestingly start with section 38 rather than section 1. But overall they amplify and clarify, rather than supersede, the text in Wang Bi.

- 7th century CE text is translated into Sanskrit, and taken to India by a Buddhist monk, Xuanzang (596–664 CE).
- 1778 one Matthew Raper presents a Latin version of the *Daode jing*, produced by Jesuit missionaries in China, to the Royal Asiatic Society. This version is the earliest known Western translation of the text.
- 1842 the next earliest Western translation, by Stanislas Julien, appears in French.
- 1868 the first translation into English, by John Chalmers, is published, to be followed by those of Frederic Balfour (1884) and James Legge (1891).
- 1870 the first translation into German, by Victor von Strauss.
- late 19th century – over 250 translations into European languages appear, with well over 100 into English [*see Further Reading and Links section*]
- present

TAO TE CHING *or* DAODE JING:
a note on transliteration

From the mid-19th century until relatively late in the 20th, the major system for transliterating Chinese characters into romanised letters was the Wade-Giles system. Created by Thomas Wade in the mid-19th century, and modified by Herbert Giles in his *Chinese English Dictionary*, 1892, rev. 1912, it became the world standard for much of the 20th century. Increasingly during that period, though, the sense developed that Wade-Giles, however useful for Chinese specialists, was less useful and intuitive for non-specialists, and that it was of limited help in teaching the speaking and pronunciation of Chinese. In 1958, the People's Republic of China approved a new system of romanisation, *pinyin*, based on the pronunciation of Mandarin Chinese; and this is the transliteration that is more and more becoming the world standard. The difference between the two systems can be quickly discerned in these items:

<i>Wade-Giles</i>	<i>pinyin</i>
Mao Tse-tung	Mao Zedong
Peking	Beijing
Tao	Dao
Tao Te Ching	Daodejing
I Ching	Yi Jing

Although the Wade-Giles system is perhaps still more instantly recognisable in the case of the current text (*Tao te ching* rather than *Daode jing* was an almost universal rendering in the 20th century), I have chosen to romanise the Chinese original into modern *pinyin*; and this is the transliteration that follows the Chinese on every left-hand page of the text. *Pinyin* comes closer to rendering the sound of the character, and it will soon become the standard system world-wide of the romanised transliteration of Chinese characters.

一章

道可道，非恆道。

名可名，非恆名。

無名天地之始；

有名萬物之母。

故常無欲，以觀其妙；

常有欲，以觀其徼。

此兩者同出而異名，

同謂之玄。

玄之又玄，

眾妙之門。

1

dao ke dao, fei chang dao;
ming ke ming, fei chang ming.
wu ming tian di zhi shi;
you ming wan wu zhi mu.
gu chang wu yu, yi guan qi miao;
chang you yu, yi guan qi jiao.
ci liang zhe tong chu er yi ming.
tong wei zhi xuan,
xuan zhi you xuan,
zhong miao zhi men.

I

The Way that can be spoken of
is not the changeless DAO.

The name that can be named
is not the changeless Name.

Namelessness: the blank that was before both heaven and earth.

Naming: the mother of all living things.

To understand the mysteries of DAO, empty yourself of all desire;
to understand its outward forms, fill yourself with all desire.

DAO and the world flow from the same source, but differ in name.

Their oneness is a mystery, a mystery upon a mystery,
the gateway to the essence of everything that is.

二章

天下皆知美之為美，斯惡已；

皆知善之為善，斯不善矣。

有無相生，難易相成，長短相形，高下相盈，音聲相和，前後相隨，
恆也。

是以聖人處無為之事，行不言之教，萬物作而弗始，生而弗有，為而
弗恃，功成而弗居。

夫唯弗居，是以不去。

2

tian xia jie zhi mei zhi wei mei,
si e yi;

jie zhi shan zhi wei shan,
si bu shan yi.

gu

you wu xiang sheng,
nan yi xiang cheng,
chang duan xiang xing,
gao xia xiang qing,
yin sheng xiang he,
qian hou xiang sui.

shi yi sheng ren
chu wu wei zhi shi,
xing bu yan zhi jiao;
wan wu zuo er fu shi,
sheng er fu you,
wei er bu shi,
gong cheng er fu ju.

fu wei fu ju,
shi yi bu qu.

2

The whole world recognises what is beautiful
only because of ugliness.

The whole world recognises what is good
only because of sin.

Being and non-being have a common birth.

Hard and easy complement each other;

long and short off-set each other;

high and low are measured by each other;

text and voice harmonise with each other; **NOTE**

before and after follow one another. **NOTE**

Those who have attained enlightenment

act without acting

teach without speaking.

Ten thousand things arise; the enlightened make no claim on them;

they give them life without possessing them;

they nourish them without expecting gratitude;

they finish what they have to do without claiming recognition.

It is because they make no claim to recognition

that they are recognised for ever.

三章

不尚賢，使民不爭；
 不貴難得之貨，使民不為盜；
 不見可欲，使民心不亂。
 是以聖人之治，虛其心，實其腹；
 弱其志，強其骨。
 常使民無知無欲。
 使夫知不敢弗為而已，則無不治。

3

bu shang xian, shi min bu zheng;
 bu gui nan de zhi huo,
 shi min bu wei dao;
 bu jian ke yu,
 shi min xin bu luan.
 shi yi sheng ren zhi zhi,
 xu qi xin,
 shi qi fu,
 ruo qi zhi,
 qiang qi gu,
 chang shi min wu zhi wu yu;
 shi fu zhi zhe bu gan wei ye.
 wei wu wei,
 ze wu bu zhi.

3

If status is not praised
 people will not quarrel;
 if treasures are not prized
 people will not steal;
 if objects of desire are not displayed
 people's hearts will not be troubled.

So those who are enlightened govern by
 quietening the people's hearts and filling up their bellies;
 stilling their ambitiousness and strengthening their bones.

They show people how to live simply, without desires,
 and ensure the cunning do not dare to act.

Do what needs no action, and order will prevail.

四章

道冲，而用之或不盈。

渊兮，似萬物之宗。

挫其銳，解其紛，和其光，同其塵。

湛兮，似或存。

吾不知誰之子，象帝之先。

4

dao chang,
er yong zhi huo bu ying.
yuan xi,
si wan wu zhi zong.
cuo qi rui,
jie qi fen;
he qi guang,
tong qi chen;
zhan xi,
si huo cun.
wu bu zhi shui zhi zi,
xiang di zhi xian.

4

DAO is an emptiness

but to use it will not drain it.

DAO is fathomless

but is the origin of everything that is.

It blunts sharp edges

untangles knots

softens glare

and merges with the dust of all the world.

Profoundly still, it has always been like this.

I do not know whose child it is.

It images the forefather of God.

五章

天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗；
聖人不仁，以百姓為芻狗。
天地之間，其猶橐籥乎？
虛而不屈，動而愈出。
多聞數窮，不如守中。

5

tian di bu ren,
yi wan wu wei chu gou;
sheng ren bu ren,
yi bai xing wei chu gou.
tian di zhi jian,
qi you tuo yue hu?
xu er bu qu,
dong er yu chu.
duo yan shu qiong,
bu ru shou zhong.

5

Heaven and earth are never partial;
they treat all living things dispassionately. **NOTE**
Those who are enlightened are never partial;
they treat all people equally.

The space between the heavens and the earth is like a bellows,
empty and yet inexhaustible.

The more it works, the more it makes come out.

Too many words will bring about exhaustion.

Better to hold fast to the centre within.

六章

谷神不死，是謂玄牝。
玄牝之門，是謂天地根。
綿綿若存，用之不勤。

6

gu shen bu si,
shi wei xuan pin.
xuan pin zhi men,
shi wei tian di gen.
mian mian ruo cun,
yong zhi bu qin.

6

The spirit of the valley never dies.
It is called the deep and hidden feminine.

The opening to the deep and hidden feminine
is called the root of heaven and earth.

Lingering like gossamer, it always seems to be.
Using it will never wear it out.

七章

天長地久。

天地所以能長且久者，以其不自生，故能長生。

是以聖人后其身而身先，外其身而身存。

不以其無私邪？

故能成其私。

7

tian chang di jiu.

tian di suo yi neng chang qie jiu zhe,

yi qi bu zi sheng,

gu neng chang sheng.

shi yi sheng ren

hou qi shen er shen xian,

wai qi shen er shen cun.

fei yi qi wu si ye?

gu neng cheng qi si.

7

Heaven is eternal, and earth is everlasting.

They can endure because they do not generate themselves.

That is the reason why they last for ever.

Those who are enlightened put their person last

and it comes first;

reject their selfhood

and it survives.

Is it not because they are without thought of self

that they can thus fulfil themselves?

八章

上善若水。

水善利萬物而不爭，居眾人之所惡，故几于道。

居善地，心善淵，與善仁，言善信，政善治，事善能，動善時。

夫唯不爭，故無尤。

8

shang shan ruo shui.
shui shan li wan wu er bu zheng,
chu zhong ren zhi suo wu,
gu ji yu dao.
ju shan di,
xin shan yuan,
yu shan ren.
yan shan xin,
zheng shan zhi,
shi shan neng,
dong shan shi.
fu wei bu zheng,
gu wu you.

8

The greatest good is like water.

Water is of benefit to every living thing
and does not contend with them.

It flows in lowly places disdained by all mankind,
and so comes close to DAO.

In where you live, choose solid ground;
in how you think, go deep within your mind;
in your relationships, show loving-kindness;
in what you say, hold to the truth;
in governing, be just;
in how you work, do what is best;
in what you do, be timely.

What gives a house its value is where it is;
what gives a mind its value is its depth;
what gives relationship its value is its love;
what gives words their value is their truth;
what gives a government its value is its justice;
what gives work its value is its skill;
what gives action its value is its timeliness.

Do not fight, and there will be no blame.

九章

持而盈之，不如其已。
揣而銳之，不可長保。
金玉滿堂，莫之能守。
富貴而驕，自遺其咎。
功遂身退，天下之道。

9

chi er ying zhi,
bu ru qi yi;
chuai er rui zhi,
bu ke chang bao.
jin yu man tang,
mo zhi neng shou.
fu gui er jiao,
zi yi qi jiu.
gong cheng shen tui,
tian zhi dao ye.

9

To hold and fill a cup to over-flowing
is not as good as stopping in good time.
To whet a sword-blade to the sharpest edge
cannot prevent that sharpness being lost.
To fill a house with gold and jade
will mean no-one can guard it safe.
To have both wealth and status yet still be proud
will bring about catastrophe.

Complete your work and then stand back.
That is the way of DAO.

十章

載營魄抱一，能無離乎？

專氣致柔，能如嬰兒乎？

修除玄覽，能無疵乎？

愛民治國，能無智乎？

天門開闢，能為雌乎？

明白四達，能無知乎？

生之、畜之，生而不有，長而不宰。

是為玄德。

10

zai ying po bao yi,
neng wu li hu?
tuan qi zhi rou,
neng ru ying er hu?
di chu xuan lan,
neng wu ci hu?
ai min zhi guo,
neng wu wei hu?
tian men kai he,
neng wei ci hu?
ming bai si da,
neng wu zhi hu?
sheng zhi xu zhi,
sheng er bu you,
wei er bu shi,
zhang er bu zai,
shi wei xuan de.

10

Can you enfold your body and your soul in the One
and then let go?

Can you control the breath of life in you
until you are as supple as a new-born child?

Can you cleanse your inner vision
so it is purified of stain?

Can you love the people and rule the state
in openness and humility?

As heaven's gates open wide then close,
can you be like the mother bird?

As your bright discerning comprehends all things,
can you remain in innocence?

Giving birth and nurturing,
shaping things without possessing them,
acting without expectation of reward,
leading without domination –
this is the primal power of DE.

十一章

三十輻共一轂，當其無，有車之用。

埴埴以為器，當其無，有器之用。

鑿戶牖以為室，當其無，有室之用。

故有之以為利，無之以為用。

11

san shi fu gong yi gu,

dang qi wu,

you che zhi yong.

shan zhi yi wei qi,

dang qi wu,

you qi zhi yong.

zao hu you yi wei shi,

dang qi wu,

you shi zhi yong.

gu you zhi yi wei li,

wu zhi yi wei yong.

II

Thirty spokes come together in one hub;

it is that empty space that makes the wheel turn round.

Clay is shaped to make a bowl;

it is the empty space that makes the bowl of use.

Doors and windows are cut out to make a room;

it is the empty space that makes the room of use.

So benefit from what is here;

make use of what is not.

十二章

五色令人目盲；

五音令人耳聾；

五味令人口爽；

馳騁畋獵，令人心發狂；

難得之貨，令人行妨。

是以聖人為腹不為目，故去彼取此。

12

wu se ling ren mu mang;

wu yin ling ren er long;

wu wei ling ren kou shuang;

chi cheng tian lie ling ren xin fa kuang;

nan de zhi huo ling ren xing fang.

shi yi

sheng ren wei fu bu wei mu.

gu qu bi qu ci.

12

Too many colours will confuse the eye; **NOTE**

too many notes will dull the ear;

too many tastes will numb the palate;

too much of the hunt and chase will make the heart go mad;

Precious things can hold back progress.

That is why those who are enlightened

care for what is inside themselves

not what they see outside.

They renounce the latter, and choose what is within.

十三章

寵辱若驚，貴大患若身。

何謂寵辱若驚？

寵為下，得之若驚，失之若驚，是謂寵辱若驚。

何謂貴大患若身？

吾所以有大患者，為吾有身，及吾無身，吾有何患？

故貴以身為天下，若可寄天下；

愛以身為天下，若可托天下。

13

chong ru ruo jing,
 gui da huan ruo shen.
 he wei chong ru ruo jing?
 chong wei xia,
 de zhi ruo jing,
 shi zhi ruo jing,
 shi wei chong ru ruo jing.
 he wei gui da huan ruo shen?
 wu suo yi you da huan zhe,
 wei wu you shen;
 ji wu wu shen,
 wu you he huan?
 gu
 gui yi shen wei tian xia,
 ruo ke ji tian xia;
 ai yi shen wei tian xia,
 ruo ke tuo tian xia.

13

Favour and disgrace both cause anxiety.

High rank, just like the body, causes great trouble. **NOTE**

But what is meant by ‘favour and disgrace both cause anxiety’?

When favour is bestowed upon the lowly, it causes apprehension,
just as when it is withdrawn.

This is what is meant by ‘favour and disgrace both cause anxiety.’

What is meant by ‘high rank, just like the body, causes great trouble’?

The reason why we have great trouble is because we have a body.

Without a body, what great trouble could there be?

Whoever values the world as much as their body
can be trusted to care for the world.

Whoever loves the world as much as their body
can be trusted with its guardianship.

十四章

視之不見，名曰微；

聽之不聞，名曰希；

搏之不得，名曰夷。

此三者，不可致詰，故混而為一。

其上不皎，其下不昧，繩繩兮不可名，復歸于物。

是謂無狀之狀，無物之象，是謂惚恍。

迎之不見其首，隨之不見其后。

執古之道，以御今之有。能知古始，是謂道紀。

14

shi zhi bu jian ming yue yi,
 ting zhi bu wen ming yue xi,
 bo zhi bu de ming yue wei.
 ci san zhe bu ke zhi jie,
 gu hun er wei yi.
 qi shang bu jiao,
 qi xia bu mei,
 sheng sheng bu ke ming,
 fu gui yu wu wu.
 shi wei wu zhuang zhi zhuang,
 wu wu zhi xiang,
 shi wei hu huang.
 ying zhi bu jian qi shou;
 sui zhi bu jian qi hou.
 zhi gu zhi dao yi yu jin zhi you,
 neng zhi gu shi,
 shi wei dao ji.

14

You look at it but cannot see;

its name is formlessness.

You listen to it but cannot hear;

its name is soundlessness.

You reach out for it but cannot touch;

its name is intangibility.

These three things are indefinable,
and so they intermingle in a single unity.

The aspect that it shows is not dazzling;
the aspect that it hides is not obscure.

Stretching into boundlessness, it is unnameable,
returning once again to nothingness.

It is the formless form,
the image that is imageless.

It is the indefinable,
the unimaginable.

Go up to it; you will not see its face.

Follow it behind; you will not see its back.

Hold fast to the timelessness of DAO
so you may master the realities of here and now.

Understand the very first beginning,
which is the thread that runs through all of DAO.

十五章

古之善為道者，微妙玄通，深不可識。

夫唯不可識，故強為之容：

豫兮，若冬涉川；

猶兮，若畏四鄰；

儼兮，其若客；

渙兮，其若凌釋；

敦兮，其若朴；

曠兮，其若谷；

混兮，其若濁。

孰能濁以止？

靜之徐清。

孰能安以久？

動之徐生。

保此道者，不欲盈。

夫唯不盈，故能蔽而新成。

15

gu zhi shan wei shi zhe,
 wei miao xuan tong,
 shen bu ke shi.
 fu wei bu ke shi,
 gu qiang wei zhi rong:
 yu xi ruo dong she chuan,
 you xi ruo wei si lin,
 yan xi qi ruo rong,
 huan xi ruo bing zhi jiang shi,
 dun xi qi ruo pu,
 kuang xi qi ruo gu,
 hun xi qi ruo zhuo,
 dan xi qi ruo hai,
 liao xi ruo wu zhi.
 shu neng zhuo yi zhi?
 jing zhi xu qing.
 shu neng an yi jiu?
 dong zhi xu sheng.
 bao ci dao zhe bu yu ying.

15

The ancient ones who were well-versed in DAO were subtle and mysterious, deep beyond all knowing, so profound their minds could not be plumbed.

Because they were unfathomable,
 all we can do is describe how they appeared:
 watchful like someone crossing icy streams;
 cautious like someone aware of danger;
 considerate like a welcome guest;
 yielding like a melting piece of ice;
 simple like an uncarved block of wood;
 spacious like an open valley;
 murky like a muddied pool.

Who can take murky water and,
 by stillness,
 make it gradually come clear?
 Who can take what is in stillness and,
 by constant motion,
 make it slowly come to life?

Those who embrace the DAO do not seek to be full. It is because they are not full that they can grow old and then be newly made.

DAODE JING

fu wei bu ying,
gu neng bi er xin cheng.

TAO TE CHING

十六章

致虛極，守靜篤。

萬物并作，吾以觀復。

夫物芸芸，各復歸其根。

歸根曰靜，靜曰復命。

復命曰常，知常曰明。

不知常，妄作，凶。

知常容，容乃公，公乃王，王乃天，天乃道，道乃久，歿身不殆。

16

zhi xu ji shou jing du.

wan wu bing zuo,

wu yi guan fu.

fu wu yun yun,

ge fu gui qi gen.

gui gen yue jing,

shi yue fu ming.

fu ming yue chang,

zhi chang yue ming.

bu zhi chang wang zuo xiong.

zhi chang rong,

rong nai gong,

gong nai quan,

quan nai tian,

tian nai dao,

dao nai jiu,

mo shen bu dai.

16

So touch the utmost emptiness that there is,

hold steadfastly to stillness,

and you will see all things arise in unison

as they merge back to perfect emptiness.

All things will teem forth in their growth

each one returning to its root.

Returning to the root is to find tranquillity;

this is known as returning to one's destiny.

Returning to one's destiny is known as unchangingness.

To understand unchangingness is known as enlightenment.

Not to understand unchangingness leads to error and disaster.

Understanding the unchangingness that embraces everything

leads to dispassionateness.

Dispassionateness leads to nobility,

nobility to heaven,

heaven to the DAO,

the DAO to everlastingness.

You will be free from danger to the end of your life.

十七章

太上，不知有之；
其次，親而譽之；其次，畏之；
其次，侮之。
信不足焉，有不信焉。
悠兮，其貴言。
功成事遂，百姓皆謂：「我自然」。

17

tai shang bu zhi you zhi,
qi ci qin er yu zhi;
qi ci wei zhi;
qi ci wu zhi;
xin bu zu yan,
you bu xin yan!
you xi qi gui yan,
gong cheng shi sui,
bai xing jie wei wo zi ran.

17

The best leaders are those whom people hardly know.
Next best are those who are both loved and praised.
Then worse are those who instil fear,
and worst of all are those who are despised.

When leaders do not trust enough,
they are themselves not trusted.

When they are quiet and choose their words with care,
they accomplish all their tasks, achieve their goals,
and everybody says, 'Look at what we've done ourselves.'

十八章

大道廢，有仁義。
智慧出，有大偽。
六親不和，有孝慈。
國家昏亂，有忠臣。

18

da dao fei,
you ren yi.
hui zhi chu,
you da wei.
liu qin bu he,
you xiao ci.
guo jia hun luan,
you zhong chen.

18

When the great DAO is lost to sight,
codes of goodness and morality appear.
When cleverness and shrewdness are produced,
massive hypocrisy appears.
When family relationships lose natural harmony,
‘filial piety’ and ‘devoted parenthood’ arise.
When there is strife and anarchy within the state,
‘loyal patriots’ abound.

十九章

絕聖棄智，民利百倍；

絕仁棄義，民復孝慈；

絕巧棄利，盜賊無有。

此三者以為文，不足。

故令有所屬：

見素抱朴，少思寡欲，絕學無憂。

19

jue sheng qi zhi,

min li bai bei;

jue ren qi yi,

min fu xiao ci;

jue qiao qi li,

dao zei wu you.

ci san zhe yi wei wen bu zu,

gu ling you suo zhu;

jian su bao pu,

shao si gua yu.

jue xue wu you.

19

Abandon sageliness, discard mere cleverness,

and people will benefit a hundredfold.

Discard morality and rectitude

and people will return to natural love.

Renounce all learnedness and ceremony

and people will not be anxious any more.

Root out craftiness and profiteering

and thieves and robbers will disappear.

Yet these four lessons are merely surface things. So let these other teachings follow:

recognise simplicity;

embrace a natural purity;

have little thought of self;

temper your desire.

二十章

唯之與阿，相去几何？
 美之與惡，相去若何？
 人之所畏，不可不畏。
 荒兮，其未央哉！
 眾人熙熙，如享太牢，如春登台。
 我獨泊兮，其未兆。
 沌沌兮，如嬰兒之未孩。
 儻儻兮，若無所歸。
 眾人皆有餘，而我獨若遺。
 我愚人之心也哉，沌沌兮！
 俗人昭昭，我獨昏昏。
 俗人察察，我獨悶悶。
 淡兮，其若海，望兮，若無止。
 眾人皆有以，而我獨頑似鄙。
 我獨異于人，而貴食母。

20

wei zhi yue, xiang qu ji he?
 shan zhi yue, xiang qu ruo he?
 ren zhi suo wei bu ke bu wei,
 huang xi qi wei yang zai!
 zhong ren xi xi,
 ru xiang tai lao,
 ru chun deng tai.
 wo du bo xi qi wei zhao,
 dun dun xi ru ying er zhi wei hai,
 lei lei xi ruo wu suo gui!
 zhong ren jie you yu,
 er wo du ruo yi.
 wo yu ren zhi xin ye zai!
 su ren zhao zhao,
 wo du hun hun.
 su ren cha cha,
 wo du men men.
 zhong ren jie you yi,
 er wo du wan si bi.

20

How far apart are 'yes' and 'no'?
 How much alike are 'good' and 'bad'?
 Must I fear what others fear?
 My fear then would not have an end.

The people all are full of joy
 as if partaking in a sacrificial feast,
 or going on an outing in the spring.
 I alone remain here calm. I show no sign,
 like a baby who has yet to smile,
 forlorn, with nowhere to go back to.
 The people now have all they want, and more;
 but I alone seem to be in need.

I am a fool. I am so muddled and confused. **NOTE**

Ordinary people are so very bright;
 I alone seem dull and dark.
 Ordinary people are so very sharp;
 I alone seem muddled and withdrawn.
 The people all have things to do;
 I alone seem stubborn and uncouth.
 I alone am different from others,
 suckling the Great Mother for my nourishment.

DAODE JING

wo du yi yu ren,
er gui si mu.

TAO TE CHING

二十一章

孔德之容，惟道是從。

道之為物，惟恍惟惚。

惚兮恍兮，其中有象；

恍兮惚兮，其中有物；

窈兮冥兮，其中有精；

其精甚真，其中有信。

自今及古，其名不去，以閱眾甫。

吾何以知眾甫之狀哉？以此。

21

kong de zhi rong,

wei dao shi cong.

dao zhi wei wu,

wei huang wei hu.

hu xi huang xi,

qi zhong you xiang;

huang xi hu xi,

qi zhong you wu;

yao xi ming xi,

qi zhong you jing,

qi jing shen zhen,

qi zhong you xin.

zi gu ji jin,

qi ming bu qu,

yi yue zhong fu.

wu he yi zhi zhong fu zhi zhuang zai?

yi ci.

21

The greatest virtue is to follow DAO, and DAO alone.

As a thing, the DAO is vague and indistinct.

Within it is a form, vague and indistinct.

Within it is a substance, vague and indistinct.

Within it is an essence, hidden and profound.

This essence is completely true; within it lies its proof.

From ancient times until today,

its name has never been forgotten.

By means of it, we see the origin of everything.

How do I know the origin of everything?

By means of it. **NOTE**

二十二章

「曲則全，枉則直，窪則盈，敝則新，少則得，多則惑。」

是以聖人抱一為天下式。

不自見，故明；

不自是，故彰；

不自伐，故有功；

不自矜，故長。

夫唯不爭，故天下莫能與之爭。

古之所謂「曲則全」者，豈虛言哉！

誠全而歸之。

22

qu ze quan,
wang ze zhi,
wa ze ying,
bi ze xin,
shao ze de,
duo ze huo.

shi yi sheng ren bao yi wei tian xia shi.

bu zi jian gu ming;

bu zi shi gu zhang;

bu zi fa gu you gong;

bu zi jin gu zhang.

fu wei bu zheng,

gu tian xia mo neng yu zhi zheng.

gu zhi suo wei qu ze quan zhe

qi xu yan zai?

cheng quan er gui zhi.

22

Yield, and you will be preserved;

bend, and you will become straight;

be empty, and you will be filled;

grow old, and you will be renewed;

have little, and you will gather much;

have much, and you will lose your way.

Because of this, those who are enlightened embrace the primal unity
and offer up a model to the world.

They do not display themselves, and so shine bright;
they do not promote themselves, and so become illustrious;
they do not boast, and so gain recognition;
they are not arrogant, and so endure.

It is because they do not compete

that no-one in the world competes with them.

The ancient saying, 'Yield, and you will be preserved',

is not just empty words.

Through them, that perfect wholeness can be restored to you.

二十三章

希言自然。

故飄風不終朝，驟雨不終日。

孰為此者？

天地。

天地尚不能久，而況于人乎？

故從事于道者，同于道；

德者，同于德；

失者，同于失。

同于道者，道亦樂得之；

同于德者，德亦樂得之；

同于失者，失亦樂得之。

信不足焉，有不信焉。

23

xi yan zi ran.

gu piao feng bu zhong zhao,

zhou yu bu zhong ri.

shu wei ci zhe?

tian di.

tian di shang bu neng jiu,

er kuang yu ren hu?

gu cong shi yu dao zhe tong yu dao,

de zhe tong yu de,

shi zhe tong yu shi.

tong yu dao zhe,

dao yi le de zhi;

tong yu de zhe,

de yi le de zhi;

tong yu shi zhe,

shi yi le de zhi.

xin bu zu yan,

you bu xin yan!

23

Speaking sparingly is quite natural.

A whirlwind cannot last all morning;

a rainstorm cannot last all day.

What causes these? The heavens and the earth.

If heaven and earth can't make them last for long,
then how much less mere humankind.

Follow the DAO in everything you do, and you will be one with DAO.

A person who is of the DAO identifies with DAO.

A person who is of the DE identifies with DE.

A person who is lost identifies with loss.

Whoever identifies with DAO will be welcomed by the DAO.

Whoever identifies with DE will be welcomed by the DE.

Whoever identifies with loss will be welcomed by loss.

If you do not trust, you won't be trusted.

二十四章

企者不立;

跨者不行;

自見者不明;

自是者不彰;

自伐者無功;

自矜者不長。

其在道也，曰餘食贅形，物或惡之，故有道者不居。

24

qi zhe bu li;

kua zhe bu xing;

zi xian zhe bu ming;

zi shi zhe bu zhang;

zi fa zhe wu gong;

zi jin zhe bu zhang.

qi zai dao ye,

yue yu shi zhui xing,

wu huo wu zhi,

gu you dao zhe bu chu.

24

If you are on tiptoes, you cannot stand steady.

If you straddle something, you cannot walk.

Those who make a show will never shine.

Those who are assertive will never be illustrious.

Those who boast will never find achievement.

Those who wallow in conceit will never last.

To a person of the DAO, these things are like

too much food or useless action.

Everything disdains them, so those who seek the DAO

reject them.

二十五章

有物混成，先天地生。

寂兮寥兮，獨立而不改，周行而不殆，可以為天地母。

吾不知其名，字之曰道，強為之名曰大。

大曰逝，逝曰遠，遠曰反。

故道大，天大，地大，人亦大。

域中有四大，而人居其一焉。

人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然。

25

you wu hun cheng,
xian tian di sheng.
ji xi liao xi,
du li bu gai,
zhou xing er bu dai,
ke yi wei tian di mu.
wu bu zhi qi ming,
zi zhi yue dao,
qiang wei zhi ming yue da.
da yue shi,
shi yue yuan,
yuan yue fan.
gu dao da,
tian da,
di da,
ren yi da.
yu zhong you si da,
er ren ju qi yi yan.
ren fa di,
di fa tian,
tian fa dao,
dao fa zi ran.

25

There was a thing unformed and yet complete

before the heavens and the earth were born.

Silent, depthless, it stood alone, unchangingly,

pervading everything that was, and inexhaustible.

It can be thought of as the mother of the world.

I do not know its name,

and so I call it DAO.

If forced to describe it, I can only call it 'what is Great.'

'Great' means 'ever-flowing';

'ever-flowing' means 'reaching far away';

'reaching far away' means 'returning to the source'.

So DAO is great,

heaven is great,

the earth is great,

and humankind is also great.

There are four greatnesses in the universe,

and humankind is one of them. **NOTE**

Human beings emulate the earth;

the earth emulates the heavens;

the heavens emulate the DAO;

the DAO emulates its self-becoming.

二十六章

重為輕根，靜為躁君。
 是以君子終日行不離輜重。
 雖有榮觀，燕處超然。
 奈何萬乘之主，而以身輕天下？
 輕則失根，躁則失君。

26

zhong wei qing gen,
 jing wei zao jun.
 shi yi
 sheng ren zhong ri xing
 bu li zi zhong,
 sui you rong guan,
 yan chu chao ran.
 nai he wan sheng zhi zhu
 er yi shen qing tian xia?
 qing ze shi gen,
 zao ze shi jun.

26

Gravity is the root of lightness;
 serenity the master of unrest.

That is why those who are enlightened travel all day long
 and never leave the laden baggage-cart. **NOTE**
 Though there may be glorious sights to see,
 they stay calm and unconcerned.
 How could the ruler of ten thousand chariots
 behave light-heartedly towards the world?

Act light-heartedly, and the root is lost.
 Act rashly, and the mastery is lost.

二十七章

善行，無轍跡；

善言，無瑕謫；

善數，不用籌策；

善閉，無關鍵而不可開；

善結，無繩約而不可解。

是以聖人常善救人，故無棄人；

常善救物，故無棄物。

是謂神明。

故善人者，不善人之師；

不善人者，善人之資。

不貴其師，不愛其資，雖智大迷。

是謂要妙。

27

shan xing, wu zhe ji;

shan yan, wu xia zhe;

shan shu, bu yong chou ce;

shan bi, wu guan jian er bu ke kai;

shan jie, wu sheng yue er bu ke jie.

shi yi

sheng ren chang shan jiu ren,

gu wu qi ren;

chang shan jiu wu,

gu wu qi wu.

shi wei xi ming.

gu

shan ren zhe bu shan ren zhi shi,

bu shan ren zhe shan ren zhi zi.

bu gui qi shi,

bu ai xi qi zi,

sui zhi da mi.

shi wei yao miao.

27

Good travellers leave no track behind;

good speakers make no slips;

good counters need no abacus.

Good locks do not need bolts or bars,

yet no one can open them.

Good knots do not use rope or cord,

yet no one can loosen them.

Those who are enlightened are always good at tending humankind,

leaving nobody behind;

Those who are enlightened are always good at tending things,

leaving not a thing behind.

This is known as 'following the Light.'

The good are teachers of the bad;

the bad provide the lesson for the good.

Not to value one's teacher,

nor to care for one's lessons,

may seem very clever but reveals great delusion.

This is an essential teaching of the DAO.

二十八章

知其雄，守其雌，為天下溪。

為天下溪，常德不離。

常德不離，復歸于嬰兒。

知其榮，守其辱，為天下谷。

為天下谷，常德乃足。

常德乃足，復歸于朴。

知其白，守其黑，為天下式。

為天下式，常德不忒。

常德不忒，復歸于無極。

朴散則為器，聖人用之，則為官長。

故大制無割。

28

zhi qi xiong,
shou qi ci,
wei tian xia xi.
wei tian xia xi,
chang de bu li,
fu gui yu ying er.
zhi qi bai,
shou qi hei,
wei tian xia shi.
chang de bu te,
fu gui yu wu ji.
zhi qi rong,
shou qi ru,
wei tian xia gu.
wei tian xia gu,
chang de nai zu,
fu gui yu pu.
pu san ze wei qi,
sheng ren yong zhi,
ze wei guan zhang.
gu
da zhi bu ge.

28

To know the male yet hold fast to the female
is to be a channel for the world.

If you are a channel for the world,
you are never separated from the path of DE
and so become just like a child again.

To know the white yet hold fast to the black
is to be a model for the world.

If you are a model for the world,
you never deviate from the path of DE
and so return again to what is infinite.

To know honour yet hold fast to humility
is to be a valley to the world.

If you are a valley to the world,
the DE will be enough;
you will return to the primal simplicity of uncarved wood.

When the uncarved block is broken up,
it is shaped into useful tools.

In the hands of those who are enlightened,
these tools become judges who endure.

The finest rulers do not mutilate.

二十九章

將欲取天下而為之，吾見其不得已。

天下神器，不可為也。

為者敗之，執者失之。

物，或行或隨，或噓或吹，或強或羸，或挫或騖。

是以聖人去甚，去奢，去泰。

29

jiang yu qu tian xia er wei zhi,
wu jian qi bu de yi.
tian xia shen qi,
bu ke wei ye.
wei zhe bai zhi,
zhi zhe shi zhi.
fu wu
huo xing huo sui,
huo xu huo chui,
huo qiang huo lei,
huo zai huo hui.
shi yi
sheng ren qu shen qu she qu tai.

29

If you try to seize the world

and shape it as you want,

I tell you that you won't succeed.

The world is a sacred vessel,

and nothing can be done to it.

Tamper with it, and you will ruin it,

lay hold of it, and you will lose it.

In everything, you sometimes lead and sometimes follow.

You sometimes breathe gently and sometimes breathe hard.

You are sometimes strong and sometimes weak.

You sometimes overcome and sometimes are destroyed.

Those who are enlightened avoid extremes,

avoid extravagance,

avoid excess.

三十章

以道佐人主者，不以兵強天下，其事好還：

師之所居，荆棘生焉。

大軍之后，必有凶年。

善有果而已，不以取強。

果而勿矜，果而勿伐，果而勿驕，果而不得已，果而勿強。

物壯則老，是謂不道，不道早已。

30

yi dao zuo ren zhu zhe,
bu yi bing qiang tian xia,
qi shi hao huan:
shi zhi suo chu, jing ji sheng yan,
da jun zhi hou, bi you xiong nian.
shan you guo er yi,
bu gan yi qu qiang.
guo er wu jin,
guo er wu fa,
guo er wu jiao,
guo er bu de yi,
guo er wu qiang.
wu zhuang ze lao,
shi wei bu dao,
bu dao zao yi.

30

Whoever rules a people according to the DAO
will not use force against the world.

Such things soon turn on themselves.

Where armies once encamped,
thorns and brambles grow.
In the wake of mighty battles,
famines always follow.

Good commanders realise their aims, then stop.
They do not try then to intimidate.

They are resolved, but are not arrogant;
they are resolved, but do not boast;
they are resolved, but are not proud;
they are resolved, but in a natural way;
they are resolved, but do not overpower.

Whatever uses force will then decay,
for this is not an action of the DAO.

Whatever goes against the DAO
will soon come to an end.

三十一章

夫兵者，不祥之器。
 物或惡之，故有道者不居。
 君子居則貴左，用兵則貴右，故兵者非君子之器。
 不祥之器，不得已而用之，恬淡為上。
 勝而不美，而美之者，是樂殺人。
 夫樂殺人者，則不可得志于天下矣。
 吉事尚左，凶事尚右。
 偏將軍居左，上將軍居右，言以喪禮處之。
 殺人之眾，以悲哀泣之，戰勝以喪禮處之。

31

fu bing zhe bu xiang zhi qi,
 wu huo wu zhi,
 gu you dao zhe bu chu.
 jun zi ju ze gui zuo,
 yong bing ze gui you.
 bing zhe bu xiang zhi qi,
 fei jun zi zhi qi,
 bu de yi er yong zhi,
 tian dan wei shang.
 sheng er bu mei.
 er mei zhi zhe,
 shi le sha ren.
 fu le sha ren zhe,
 bu ke yi de zhi yu tian xia yi.
 ji shi shang zuo,
 xiong shi shang you.
 pian jiang jun ju zuo,
 shang jiang jun ju you,
 yan yi sang li chu zhi.
 sha ren zhi zhong,
 yi ai bei qi zhi,
 zhan sheng yi sang li chu zhi.

31

Even fine weapons are instruments of evil,
 loathed by everything.
 Whoever follows the DAO spurns them.

When wise rulers are at home, they value the left and restful side;
 but when they are at war, they value the right and active side.

Yet weapons are instruments of evil
 and not the instruments that wise rulers use.
 Only when essential will they resort to them.

Peace and quiet are best of all
 and victory is no delight.
 To delight in victory is to delight in people's slaughter;
 and whoever so delights will never gain
 what they desire in the world.

In joyful times, the left side is preferred,
 in mournful times, the right.
 A second-in-command stands on the left,
 a general upon the right;
 this means a funeral is taking place.

When multitudes of people are killed, they should be mourned,
 so that the victory itself becomes a funeral.

三十二章

道常無名。

朴雖小，天下莫能臣。

侯王若能守之，萬物將自賁。

天地相合，以降甘露，民莫之令而自均。

始制有名，名亦既有，夫亦將知止。

知止可以不殆。

譬道之在天下，猶川谷之于江海。

32

dao chang wu ming.
 pu sui xiao,
 tian xia mo neng chen ye.
 hou wang ruo neng shou zhi,
 wan wu jiang zi bin.
 tian di xiang he,
 yi jiang gan lu,
 min mo zhi ling er zi jun.
 shi zhi you ming.
 ming yi ji you,
 fu yi jiang zhi zhi.
 zhi zhi ke yi bu dai.
 pi dao zhi zai tian xia,
 you chuan gu zhi yu jiang hai.

32

The DAO is forever nameless.

The simple, uncarved block of wood is small,
yet nothing in the world can master it.

If kings and lords would follow it,
all things would honour them.

Heaven and earth would join in harmony;
sweet rain would fall,

and people would find harmony, unenforced.

As soon as there are rules

the naming of things begins.

But when naming things begins,

we ought to know where it should stop.

When we know where it should stop,

we shall be free of danger.

The DAO is to the world

what great rivers and oceans
are to rivulets and streams.

三十三章

知人者智，自知者明；
勝人者有力，自勝者強。

知足者富。

強行者有志。

不失其所者久。

死而不亡者壽。

33

zhi ren zhe zhi,
zi zhi zhe ming.
sheng ren zhe you li,
zi sheng zhe qiang.
zhi zu zhe fu,
qiang xing zhe you zhi,
bu shi qi suo zhe jiu,
si er bu wang zhe shou.

33

Those who understand others are intelligent;
but those who understand themselves have true enlightenment.

Those who master others are strong;
but those who master what they are themselves have true power.

Those who know when they have had enough are rich;
those who persevere have inner strength;
those who stay where they belong endure;
those who die but are remembered gain immortality.

三十四章

大道泛兮，其可左右。
 萬物恃之而生而不辭，功成而不名有。
 衣養萬物而不為主，可名于小；
 萬物歸焉而不為主，可名為大。
 以其終不自為大，故能成其大。

34

da dao fan xi,
 qi ke zuo you.
 wan wu shi zhi yi sheng er bu ci,
 gong cheng bu ming you.
 yi yang wan wu er bu wei zhu,
 ke ming yu xiao;
 wan wu gui yan er bu wei zhu,
 ke ming wei da.
 yi qi zhong bu zi wei da,
 gu neng cheng qi da.

34

The great DAO flows everywhere
 and reaches all things whether left or right.
 Everything that lives depends on it,
 and it does not refuse them life.
 It accomplishes its purposes
 but makes no claim to credit.
 It clothes and feeds all living things
 but does not want to master them.
 Forever free from all desire, it might be called 'the Little';
 and yet all living things return to it as home.
 It does not want to master them,
 and so it should be called 'the Great'.
 Because it never strives for greatness,
 it achieves the great.

三十五章

執大象，天下往。往而不害，安平泰。

樂與餌，過客止。

道之出口，淡乎其無味，視之不足見，聽之不足聞，用之不足既。

35

zhi da xiang,
tian xia wang.
wang er bu hai,
an ping tai.
le yu er,
guo ke zhi.
dao zhi chu kou,
dan hu qi wu wei,
shi zhi bu zu jian,
ting zhi bu zu wen,
yong zhi bu zu ji.

35

Grasp the image of the Great and the world will come to you,
will come unharmed
in overwhelming happiness.

Music and fine food may make a traveller pause;
yet words about the DAO
may seem bland and flavourless.

If you look for it, it is imperceptible.

If you listen for it, it is inaudible.

If you use it, it is inexhaustible.

三十六章

將欲歛之，必故張之；
 將欲弱之，必故強之；
 將欲廢之，必故興之；
 將欲取之，必故與之。

是謂微明。

柔弱勝剛強。

魚不可脫于淵，國之利器不可以示人。

36

jian yu xi zhi,
 bi gu zhang zhi;
 jiang yu ruo zhi,
 bi gu qiang zhi;
 jiang yu fei zhi,
 bi gu xing zhi;
 jiang yu duo zhi,
 bi gu yu zhi.
 shi wei wei ming,
 rou ruo sheng gang qiang.
 yu bu ke tuo yu yuan,
 guo zhi li qi
 bu ke yi shi ren.

36

If you want to shrink something,
you first must stretch it out.

If you want to weaken something,
you first must strengthen it.

If you want to abandon something,
you first must establish it.

If you want to take something,
you first must give it.

This is called the mystery of enlightenment.

The soft and weak will overcome the hard and strong.

Just as fish should not be taken from the deep,
 a country's weapons
 should not be shown to anyone.

三十七章

道恆無名，侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。

化而欲作，吾將鎮之以無名之朴。

無名之朴，夫亦將不欲。

不欲以靜，天地將自正。

37

dao chang wu wei,
er wu bu wei.

hou wang ruo neng shou zhi,
wan wu jiang zi hua.

hua er yu zuo,

wu jiang zhen zhi yi wu ming zhi pu.

zhen zhi yi wu ming zhi pu,

fu jiang bu yu.

bu yu yi jing,

tian xia jiang zi ding.

37

The DAO never acts, yet nothing is not done.

If rulers could hold fast to it,

all things upon the earth

would be transformed spontaneously.

If transformation should waken old desires,

they would be calmed by the nameless, uncarved block.

The nameless, uncarved block

is but freedom from desire.

Freedom from desire brings stillness, harmony,

and all the world is naturally at peace.

三十八章

上德不德，是以有德；
下德不失德，是以無德。

上德無為而無以為；

下德無為而有以為。

上仁為之而無以為；

上義為之而有以為。

上禮為之而莫之應，則攘臂而扔之。

故失道而后德，失德而后仁，失仁而后義，失義而后禮。

夫禮者，忠信之薄，而亂之首。

前識者，道之華，而愚之始。

是以大丈夫居其厚，不居其薄；

居其實，不居其華。

故去彼取此。

38

shang de bu de,

shi yi you de.

xia de bu shi de,

shi yi wu de.

shang de wu wei er wu yi wei.

xia de wu wei er you yi wei.

shang ren wei zhi er wu yi wei.

shang yi wei zhi er you yi wei.

shang li wei zhi er mo zhi ying,

ze rang bi er reng zhi.

gu

shi dao er hou de,

shi de er hou ren,

shi ren er hou yi,

shi yi er hou li.

fu li zhe,

zhong xin zhi bo er luan zhi shou.

qian zhi zhe,

dao zhi hua er yu zhi shi.

shi yi da zhang fu

chu qi hou bu ju qi bo,

80

38

The greatest DE is not conscious of the DE,
and so is truly DE.

The lowest DE is always conscious of the DE,
and so is truly without DE.

The highest DE never acts,
yet nothing is not done.

The lowest DE is for ever acting,
yet everything remains undone.

Those of greatest kindness act without ulterior intent.

Those of greatest rectitude act with ulterior intent.

Those of greatest propriety act, but when no one responds,
they bear their arms and use brute force.

When the DAO is lost, DE remains.

When DE is lost, kindheartedness remains.

When kindheartedness is lost, morality remains.

When morality is lost, only etiquette is left.

Etiquette is the veneer of loyalty and good faith
and the beginning of disaster.

Foresight is a flowery trapping of the DAO
and the beginning of folly.

Great people set their minds upon the substance, not the surface,
on the fruit and not the flower.

They reject the one and accept the other.

81

DAODE JING

chu qi shi bu ju qi hua.
gu qu bi qu ci.

TAO TE CHING

三十九章

昔之得一者：

天得一以清；

地得一以寧；

神得一以靈；

谷得一以盈；

侯得一以為天下正。

其致之。

天無以清，將恐裂；

地無以寧，將恐廢；

神無以靈，將恐歇；

谷無以盈，將恐竭；

侯王無以貴高，將恐蹶。

故貴以賤為本，高以下為基。

是以侯王自謂「孤」、「寡」、「不谷」。

此非以賤為本耶？

非乎？

故致數譽無譽。

是故不欲祿祿如玉。

珞珞如石。

39

xi zhi de yi zhe
 tian de yi yi qing,
 di de yi yi ning,
 shen de yi yi ling,
 gu de yi yi ying,
 wan wu de yi yi sheng,
 hou wang de yi yi wei tian xia zhen.
 qi zhi zhi ye,
 tian wu yi qing jiang kong lie;
 di wu yi ning jiang kong fa;
 shen wu yi ling jiang kong xie;
 gu wu yi ying jiang kong jie;

39

From ancient times, these things have attained a oneness with the DAO:

heaven attains oneness and becomes clear;

earth attains oneness and becomes serene;

spirits attain oneness and become strong;

valleys attain oneness and become full;

all things attain oneness and become alive;

rulers attain oneness and become just.

It is oneness that makes them what they are.

Without clarity, heaven would split;

without serenity, earth would sink;

without strength, spirits would dissolve;

without fullness, valleys would run dry;

without livingness, all things would be destroyed;

without justice, rulers would be toppled.

So greatness must have humility as its root,

the high must have the low as its foundation.

When rulers call themselves 'alone' or 'desolate' or 'worthless',

do they not make humility their root?

And so the ultimate renown is to be without renown;

do not seek to shine like jade, but to drop down like a stone.

DAODE JING

wan wu wu yi sheng jiang kong mie;
hou wang wu yi gui gao jiang kong jue.

gu

gui yi jian wei ben,
gao yi xia wei ji.

shi yi hou wang zi wei gu gua bu gu.
ci fei yi jian wei ben ye?

fei hu?

gu

zhi shu yu wu yu.
bu yu lu lu ru yu,
luo luo ru shi.

TAO TE CHING

四十章

反者道之動。

弱者道之用。

天下萬物生于有，有生于無。

40

fan zhe dao zhi dong,

ruo zhe dao zhi yong.

tian xia wan wu sheng yu you,

you sheng yu wu.

40

The movement of the DAO is to return;

the way of the DAO is to yield.

Everything on earth is born of Being,

but Being is born of the nothingness of DAO.

四十一章

上士聞道，勤而行之；

中士聞道，若存若亡；

下士聞道，大笑之。

不笑不足以為道。

故建言有之：

「明道若昧，進道若退，夷道若類，上德若谷，大白若辱，廣德若不

足，建德若偷；

質真若渝，大方無隅，大器晚成，大音希聲，大象無形。」

道隱無名，夫唯道，善始且善成。

41

shang shi wen dao,

qin er xing zhi.

zhong shi wen dao,

ruo cun ruo wang.

xia shi wen dao,

da xiao zhi.

bu xiao bu zu yi wei dao!

gu jian yan you zhi:

ming dao ruo mei,

jin dao ruo tui,

yi dao ruo lei,

shang de ruo gu,

da bai ruo ru,

guang de ruo bu zu,

jian de ruo tou,

zhi zhen ruo yu.

da fang wu yu,

da qi wan cheng,

da yin xi sheng,

da xiang wu xing.

dao yin wu ming,

fu wei dao shan dai qie cheng.

41

When wise students hear about the DAO,

they follow it with care.

When ordinary students hear about the DAO,

they sometimes believe in it, and sometimes doubt.

When foolish students hear about the DAO,

they laugh at it out loud.

If they did not laugh at it, it would not be the **DAO**.

There are these age-old sayings:

the brightest way seems dark;

the way forward seems like retreat;

the way that is smooth seems to be rough;

the highest goodness seems quite empty;

the purest whiteness seems to be soiled;

the vastest goodness seems insufficient;

the staunchest goodness seems to be frail;

the most solid reality seems to change.

The greatest square has no corners;

the greatest talents ripen late;

the greatest music has no sound;

the greatest images have no form.

The DAO is hidden, beyond all name;

and yet it is the DAO that nourishes and fulfils all things.

四十二章

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。

萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和。

人之所惡，唯「孤」、「寡」、「不谷」。

而王公以為稱。

故，物或損之而益，或益之而損。

人之所教，我亦教之：

「強梁者不得其死」，吾將以為教父。

42

dao sheng yi,
 yi sheng er,
 er sheng san,
 san sheng wan wu.
 wan wu fu yin er bao yang,
 chong qi yi wei he.
 ren zhi suo wu,
 wei gu gua bu gu.
 er wang gong yi wei cheng.
 gu wu
 huo sun zhi er yi;
 huo yi zhi er sun.
 ren zhi suo jiao,
 wo yi jiao zhi:
 "qiang liang zhe bu de qi si",
 wu jiang yi wei jiao fu.

42

The DAO gave birth to One.

One gave birth to Two.

Two gave birth to Three.

Three gave birth to everything there is.

Everything there is carries on its back the shade of *yin* NOTE
 and in its arms the sun of *yang*;
 and blends the vital breath of each
 to achieve a harmony.

Nothing is more loathed by people than to be
 alone, or desolate, or worthless.

Yet these are the very titles that
 kings and princes give themselves.

By losing, one may gain.

By gaining, one may lose.

What others teach, I also teach:

‘The violent and strong will never die a natural death.’

That is the basis of my teaching.

四十三章

天下之至柔，馳騁天下之至堅。

無有入無間。

吾是以知無為之有益。

不言之教，無為之益，天下希及之。

43

tian xia zhi zhi rou
chi cheng tian xia zhi zhi jian.
wu you ru wu jian.
wu shi yi zhi wu wei zhi you yi.
bu yan zhi jiao,
wu wei zhi yi,
tian xia xi ji zhi.

43

The softest things in all the world
can overcome the hardest things in all the world.

Only Nothingness can penetrate spacelessness.

That is why I understand the benefit of not acting.

The teaching that is wordless, the benefit of not acting –
seldom in the world are these things understood.

四十四章

名與身孰親？

身與貨孰多？

得與亡孰病？

是故，甚愛必大費，多藏必厚亡。

知足不辱，知止不殆，可以長久。

44

ming yu shen shu qin?

shen yu huo shu duo?

de yu wang shu bing?

shen ai bi da fei,

duo cang bi hou wang.

gu zhi zu bu ru,

zhi zhi bu dai,

ke yi chang jiu.

44

Which is more precious, fame or self?

which is worth more, self or wealth?

which is more harmful, winning or losing?

The stronger your love, the greater the price;

the larger your hoard, the heavier the loss.

Knowing what is enough frees you from shame;

knowing when you should stop frees you from danger.

Only so can you live a long life.

四十五章

大成若缺，其用不弊。
大盈若冲，其用不窮。
大直若屈，大巧若拙，
大辯若訥。
躁勝寒，靜勝熱，清靜為天下正。

45

da cheng ruo que,
qi yong bu bi.
da ying ruo chong,
qi yong bu qiong.
da zhi ruo qu,
da qiao ruo zhuo,
da bian ruo ne.
zao sheng han,
jing sheng re,
qing jing wei tian xia zheng.

45

The greatest perfection seems imperfect,
yet use will never wear it out.
The greatest fullness seems quite empty,
yet use will never drain it dry.

The greatest straightness looks like crookedness,
the greatest skill like clumsiness,
the greatest eloquence like stammering.

Restlessness defeats the cold,
but stillness overcomes the heat.

Serenity and calmness set the standard for the world.

四十六章

天下有道，卻走馬以糞。
天下無道，戎馬生于郊。
禍莫大于不知足；
咎莫大于欲得。
故，知足之足，常足矣。

46

tian xia you dao,
que zou ma yi fen.
tian xia wu dao,
rong ma sheng yu jiao.
huo mo da yu bu zhi zu,
jiu mo da yu yu de.
gu
zhi zu zhi zu,
chang zu yi.

46

When the world lives in accord with DAO,
galloping horses fertilise the fields.
When the world ignores the DAO,
horses for war breed in the countryside.

There is no greater curse than discontent,
no crueller curse than gaining your desires.
Know when enough is enough,
and you'll always have enough.

四十七章

不出戶，知天下；

不窺牖，見天道。

其出彌遠，其知彌少。

是以聖人不行而知，不見而明，不為而成。

47

bu chu hu,
zhi tian xia.
bu kui you,
jian tian dao.
qi chu mi yuan,
qi zhi mi shao.
shi yi sheng ren
bu xing er zhi,
bu jian er ming,
bu wei er cheng.

47

Without stepping outside your door,
you can know the world.

Without looking out of your window,
you can see heaven.

The further you go, the less you will know.

So those who are enlightened know without going,
understand without seeing,
accomplish without acting.

四十八章

為學日益，為道日損。
損之又損，以至于無為。
無為而無不為。
取天下常以無事。
及其有事，不足以取天下。

48

wei xue ri yi,
wei dao ri sun,
sun zhi you sun,
yi zhi yu wu wei.
wu wei er wu bu wei.
qu tian xia chang yi wu shi.
ji qi you shi,
bu zu yi qu tian xia.

48

Students of knowledge learn more each day;
students of the DAO do less each day.
Less and less is done until non-action is achieved.
When nothing is done,
there is nothing that is left undone.

To win the world, you must not interfere;
if you interfere, you will never win the world.

四十九章

聖人常無心，以百姓心為心。

善者吾善之，不善者吾亦善之，得善。

信者吾信之，不信者吾亦信之，得信。

聖人在天下，歛歛焉，為天下渾其心，聖人皆孩之。

49

sheng ren wu chang xin,

yi bai xing xin wei xin.

shan zhe wu shan zhi,

bu shan zhe wu yi shan zhi,
de shan.

xin zhe wu xin zhi,

bu xin zhe wu yi xin zhi,

de xin.

sheng ren zai tian xia,

xi xi yan wei tian xia hun qi xin,

bai xing jie zhu qi er mu.

sheng ren jie hai zhi.

49

Those who are enlightened have no fixed heart or mind.

The hearts and minds of ordinary people

become their heart and mind.

Those who are good they treat as good;

those who are not good they also treat as good.

This is the true DE.

Those who are sincere they treat as sincere;

those who are not sincere they also treat as sincere.

This is the true DE.

Those who are enlightened live in the world harmoniously,

blending heart and mind into the world.

The people fix their eyes and ears on them.

To those who are enlightened, all are children.

五十五章

出生入死。

生之徒，十有三；死之徒，十有三；人之生，動之死地，亦十有三。

夫何故？

以其生之厚。

蓋聞善攝生者，陵行不遇兕虎，入軍不被甲兵。

兕無所投其角，虎無所措其爪，兵無所容其刃。

夫何故？

以其無死地。

50

chu sheng ru si.

sheng zhi tu shi you san,

si zhi tu shi you san,

ren zhi sheng dong zhi yu si di

yi shi you san.

fu he gu?

yi qi sheng sheng zhi hou.

gai wen shan she shen zhe,

lu xing bu yu si hu,

ru jun bu pi jia bing,

si wu suo tou qi jiao,

hu wu suo cuo qi zhao,

bing wu suo rong qi ren,

fu he gu?

yi qi wu si di.

50

Between their birth and death,

a third of people will be followers of life,

a third will be followers of death,

and a third will be just passing from life to death.

Why? Because they cling to life too much.

It is said that whoever excels in preserving their life

can wander through the land

and not meet tiger or wild buffalo,

can cross a battlefield

and not wear armour.

In them, a buffalo will find no place to thrust its horn,

a tiger no place to sink its claws,

a weapon no place to lodge its blade.

Why is this so? Because for them, there is no realm of death.

五十一章

道生之，德畜之，物形之，器成之。

是以萬物莫不尊道而貴德。

道之尊，德之貴，夫莫之命而常自然。

故道生之，德畜之。

長之育之，亭之毒之，養之覆之，生而不有，為而不恃，長而不宰，

是謂玄德。

51

dao sheng zhi,
de xu zhi,
wu xing zhi,
she cheng zhi.

shi yi wan wu mo bu zun dao er gui de.

dao zhi zun,
de zhi gui,

fu mo zhi ming er chang zi ran.

gu
dao sheng zhi
de xu zhi,
zhang zhi yu zhi,
ting zhi du zhi,
yang zhi fu zhi.
sheng er bu you,
wei er bu shi,
zhang er bu zai,
shi wei xuan de.

51

The DAO gives life to everything;

DE nurtures it;

the world of matter gives it shape;

circumstances make it complete.

So everything that is reveres the DAO
and honours DE.

But the DAO is revered and DE honoured,
not because of a command, but naturally.

So the DAO gives life to everything,
and DE nurtures it,
raises it, and brings it up,
matures and completes it,
feeds and shelters it.

To give life without possessing,
to act without expecting gratitude,
to foster growth without controlling it –
this is called the secret DE.

五十二章

天下有始，以為天下母。

既得其母，以知其子。

既知其子，復守其母，沒身不殆。

塞其兌，閉其門，終身不勤。

啟其兌，濟其事，終身不救。

見小曰明，守柔曰強。用其光，復歸其明，無遺身殃，是為習常。

52

tian xia you shi,
yi wei tian xia mu.
ji de qi mu,
yi zhi qi zi.
ji zhi qi zi,
fu shou qi mu,
mo shen bu dai.
se qi dui,
bi qi men,
zhong shen bu qin.
kai qi dui,
ji qi shi,
zhong shen bu jiu.
jian xiao yue ming,
shou rou yue qiang.
yong qi guang
fu gui qi ming,
wu yi shen yang,
shi wei xi chang.

52

The world has a beginning,

which can be called the mother of the world.

Know the mother,

and you will know the child.

Know the child,

then go back and hold fast to the mother;

and until the end of life, you will not meet with harm.

Block up all the openings, **NOTE**

bolt firm all the doors,

and throughout your life, you will never be exhausted.

Unblock the openings,

be busy with your affairs,

and throughout your life, you will never be redeemed.

To see the small is called enlightenment.

To hold to gentleness is called strength.

Use the light to go home to enlightenment,

and you will be saved from harm.

This is known as following the changeless.

五十三章

使我介然有知，行于大道，唯施是畏。

大道甚夷，而民好徑。

朝甚除，田甚蕪，倉甚虛，服文采，帶利劍，厭飲食，財貨有餘，是

為盜竽。

非道也哉！

53

shi wo jie ran you zhi,
xing yu da dao,
wei shi shi wei.
da dao shen yi,
er min hao jing.
zhao shen chu,
tian shen wu,
cang shen xu,
fu wen cai,
dai li jian,
yan yin shi,
cai huo you yu,
shi wei dao yu.
fei dao ye zai!

53

Had I the smallest grain of understanding,
I would follow the great DAO;
my only fear would be to stray from it.

The great DAO is very smooth and straight,
and yet some people prefer the by-roads.

The royal court is kept immaculate,
and yet the fields are overgrown with weeds
and the granaries are empty.

They're dressed in finery,
with fine swords at their side;
they gorge themselves on food and drink,
and have more wealth by far than they can use.

This is the arrogance of thieves. **NOTE**
What could be further from the DAO?

五十四章

善建者不拔，善抱者不脫，子孫以祭祀不輟。

修之于身，其德乃真；

修之于家，其德乃餘；

修之于鄉，其德乃長；

修之于邦，其德乃丰；

修之于天下，其德乃普。

故以身觀身，以家觀家，以鄉觀鄉，以邦觀邦，以天下觀天下。

吾何以知天下然哉？

以此。

54

shan jian zhe bu ba,
 shan bao zhe bu tuo,
 zi sun yi ji si bu chuo.
 xiu zhi yu shen,
 qi de nai zhen;
 xiu zhi yu jia,
 qi de nai yu;
 xiu zhi yu xiang,
 qi de nai chang;
 xiu zhi yu guo,
 qi de nai feng;
 xiu zhi yu tian xia,
 qi de nai pu.
 gu
 yi shen guan shen,
 yi jia guan jia,
 yi xiang guan xiang
 yi guo guan guo,
 yi tian xia guan tian xia,
 wu he yi zhi tian xia ran zai?
 yi ci.

54

What is firmly planted cannot be uprooted;

what is firmly held cannot slip loose.

Your children and your grand-children

will worship it for generations without end.

Cultivate the DE within yourself
and the DE will be genuine.

Cultivate it in your family
and the DE will overflow.

Cultivate it in your village
and the DE will long endure.

Cultivate it in your country
and the DE will then spread wide.

Cultivate it in the world
and the DE will be everywhere.

Look at yourself as a self,
your family as a family,
your village as a village,
your country as a country,
your world as a world.

How do I know the world is like this?

By means of it. **NOTE**

五十五章

含「德」之厚，比于赤子。

毒虫不螫，猛兽不據，攫鳥不搏。

骨弱筋柔而握固。

未知牝牡之合而全作，精之至也。

終日號而不嘎，和之至也。

知和曰常，知常曰明，益生曰祥，心使氣曰強。

物壯則老，謂之不道，不道早已。

55

han de zhi hou,

bi yu chi zi.

du chong bu shi,

meng shou bu ju,

jue niao bu bo.

gu ruo jin rou er wo gu.

wei zhi pin mu zhi he er zui zuo,

jing zhi zhi ye.

zhong ri hao er bu sha,

he zhi zhi ye.

zhi he yue chang,

zhi chang yue ming.

yi sheng yue xiang,

xin shi qi yue qiang.

wu zhuang ze lao,

wei zhi bu dao,

bu dao zao yi.

55

Whoever is filled with DE

is like a new-born child.

Wasps and scorpions will not sting it;

snakes and serpents will not bite it;

wild animals will not attack it;

birds of prey will not swoop down on it.

Its bones are soft, its muscles weak,

and yet its grip is firm.

It does not know of male and female union

and yet its organ stirs;

its vital energy is at its height.

It cries throughout the day

and yet is never hoarse;

its harmony is at its height.

To know harmony is to know the eternal.

To know the eternal is to know enlightenment.

To speed the growth of life is an omen of disaster; **NOTE**

to control the breath by will-power is to overstrain it;

to grow too much is to decay.

All this is against the DAO

and whatever is against the DAO soon dies.

五十六章

知者不言，言者不知。

塞其兌，閉其門，挫其銳，解其紛，和其光，同其塵，是謂玄同。

故不可得而親，不可得而疏。

不可得而利，不可得而害。

不可得而貴，不可得而賤。

故為天下貴。

56

zhi zhe bu yan,
yan zhe bu zhi,
se qi dui,
bi qi men,
cuo qi rui,
jie qi fen,
he qi guang,
tong qi chen,
shi wei xuan tong.
gu
bu ke de er qin,
bu ke de er shu.
bu ke de er li,
bu ke de er hai.
bu ke de er gui,
bu ke de er jian.
gu wei tian xia gui.

56

Those who know do not speak of it;
those who speak do not know of it.

Those who know

keep their mouths closed,
shut all the doors, **NOTE**
blunt every sharpness,
untangle the knots,
soften the glare,
become one with the dust,
and enter the mystery of oneness.

They can be neither courted nor shunned;
they can be neither helped nor harmed;
they can be neither honoured nor disgraced.

They are the most treasured people upon the earth.

五十七章

以正治國，以奇用兵，以無事取天下。

吾何以知其然哉？

以此：

天下多忌諱，而民彌貧；

人多利器，國家滋昏；

人多伎巧，奇物滋起；

法令滋彰，盜賊多有。

故聖人云：

「我無為，而民自化；

我好靜，而民自正；

我無事，而民自富；

我無欲，而民自朴。」

57

yi zheng zhi guo,

yi qi yong bing,

yi wu shi qu tian xia.

wu he yi zhi qi ran zai?

yi ci:

tian xia duo ji hui er min mi pin;

ren duo li qi guo jia zi hun;

ren duo ji qiao qi wu zi qi;

fa ling zi zhang dao zei duo you.

gu sheng ren yun:

"wo wu wei er min zi hua

wo hao jing er min zi zheng,

wo wu shi er min zi fu,

wo wu yu er min zi pu."

57

Be straightforward in governing the nation;

be cunning in waging a war.

Conquer the world by not interfering.

How do I know that this should be so?

Because

the more taboos and restrictions,

the poorer the people become;

the sharper the weapons,

the more fear in the land;

the more cunningness,

the more abnormal the events;

the more laws,

the greater the number of thieves.

Those who are enlightened say:

I do not act,

and people are transformed naturally;

I welcome stillness,

and people do what is right naturally;

I do not interfere,

and people prosper naturally;

I am without desire,

and people return to what is simple naturally.

五十八章

其政悶悶，其民淳淳。其政察察，其民缺缺。

禍兮，福之所倚，福兮，禍之所伏。

孰知其極？

其無正。

正復為奇，善復為妖。

人之迷，其日固久！

是以聖人方而不割，廉而不劌，直而不肆，光而不耀。

58

qi zheng men men,

qi min chun chun.

qi zheng cha cha,

qi min que que.

huo xi, fu zhi suo yi,

fu xi, huo zhi suo fu.

shu zhi qi ji?

qi wu zheng ye.

zheng fu wei qi,

shan fu wei yao,

ren zhi mi, qi ri gu jiu!

shi yi sheng ren

fang er bu ge,

lian er bu gui,

zhi er bu si,

guang er bu yao.

58

When government is subdued and light,

people are simple and pure.

When government is sharp and prying,

people are cunning and mean.

It is on misfortune that good fortune rests;

it is in good fortune that misfortune hides.

Who knows the turning point, or where the standard lies?

The normal changes into abnormality;

the good changes into monstrosity.

Long indeed have people been confused.

Those who are enlightened

have sharp edges but do not cut,

have corners but do not jab,

are straight and true but do not over-reach,

shine radiantly but do not blind.

五十九章

治人、事天，莫若嗇。

夫為嗇，是謂早服，早服謂之重積德。

重積德則無不克。

無不克則莫知其極。

莫知其極，可以有國。

有國之母，可以長久。

是謂深根固柢，長生久視之道。

59

zhi ren shi tian,

mo ruo se.

fu wei se,

shi wei zao fu.

zao fu wei zhi zhong ji de;

zhong ji de ze wu bu ke;

wu bu ke ze mo zhi qi ji.

mo zhi qi ji ke yi you guo.

you guo zhi mu ke yi chang jiu.

shi wei

shen gen gu di,

chang sheng jiu shi zhi dao.

59

In governing the people and in serving heaven,
nothing surpasses moderation.

To be moderate

is to follow the DAO from early on;

to follow the DAO from early on

is to be filled to the brim with DE;

to be filled to the brim with DE

is to overcome all things;

to overcome all things

is to know all things are possible.

Whoever knows all things are possible

is fit to rule a country;

whoever guards a country as a mother would

will long endure.

This is called the DAO of deep roots and firm foundations,
a vision that is everlasting.

六十章

治大國若烹小鮮。

以道蒞天下，其鬼不神。

非其鬼不神，其神不傷人。

非其神不傷人，聖人亦不傷人。

夫兩不相傷，故德交歸焉。

60

zhi da guo ruo peng xiao xian.

yi dao li tian xia,

qi gui bu shen.

fei qi gui bu shen,

qi shen bu shang ren.

fei qi shen bu shang ren,

sheng ren yi bu shang ren,

fu liang bu xiang shang,

gu de jiao gui yan.

60

Governing a nation is like frying a small fish.

If the nation is governed according to the DAO,
dark spirits lose their power.

Not that the spirits lose their power

but that they do not harm the people.

Not only that they do not harm the people

but that those who are enlightened do not harm them either. **NOTE**

If neither of them harms the other,

the DE in them will be united and restored.

六十一章

大國者下流，天下之牝，天下之交。

牝常以靜勝牡，以靜為下。

故大國以下小國，則取小國；

小國以下大國，則取大國。

故或下以取，或下而取。

大國不過欲兼畜人，小國不過欲入事人。

夫兩者各得所欲，大者宜為下。

61

da guo zhe xia liu,
 tian xia zhi jiao ye,
 tian xia zhi pin.
 pin chang yi jing sheng mu,
 yi jing wei xia.
 gu da guo yi xia xiao guo,
 ze qu xiao guo.
 xia guo yi xia da guo,
 ze qu da guo.
 gu
 huo xia yi qu,
 huo xia er qu.
 da guo bu guo yu jian xu ren,
 xiao guo bu guo yu ru shi ren.
 fu liang zhe ge de qi suo yu,
 da zhe yi wei xia.

61

A great country is like low-lying land
into which all rivers flow.

It is the meeting place of everything upon the earth,
the female of the world.

The female can always overcome the male by stillness,
by taking up a lower place.

And so by taking up a lower place,
a great country can win over a smaller one.

By taking up a lower place,
a small country can win over a greater one.

The one wins by becoming low,
the other wins by remaining low.

A great country wants nothing more
than to unite and feed its people.

A small country wants nothing more
than to come and serve its people.

Both get what they desire,
but it is fitting that the greater should abase itself.

六十二章

道者，萬物之奧。

善人之寶，不善人之所保。

美言可以市尊，美行可以加人。

人之不善，何棄之有？

故立天子，置三公，雖有拱璧以先駟馬，不如坐進此道。

古之所以貴此道者何？

不曰：

求以得，有罪以免邪？故為天下貴。

62

dao zhe wan wu zhi ao,
 shan ren zhi bao,
 bu shan ren zhi suo bao.
 mei yan ke yi shi zun,
 mei xing ke yi jia ren.
 ren zhi bu shan,
 he qi zhi you?
 gu
 li tian zi,
 zhi san gong,
 sui you gong bi
 yi xian si ma,
 bu ru zuo jin ci dao.
 gu zhi suo yi gui ci dao zhe he?
 bu jue:
 yi qiu de,
 you zui yi mian ye?
 gu wei tian xia gui.

62

The DAO is the hidden source of everything,
 a treasure for the good,
 a refuge for the bad.

Beautiful words can be marketed,
 and honourable deeds can gain respect.
 Even if people wander from goodness,
 that is no reason to abandon them.

When an emperor is enthroned
 or the three ministers installed, **NOTE**
 let others offer precious jade
 and teams of horses.

This cannot equal sitting still
 and offering the DAO.

Why was the DAO so valued from on old?
 Was it not because, in the DAO,
 those who seek will find,
 and those who sin will be forgiven?
 That is why it is the treasure of the world.

六十三章

為無為，事無事，味無味。

大小多少，報怨以德。

圖難于其易；

為大于其細。

天下難事，必作于易；

天下大事，必作于細。

是以聖人終不為大，故能成其大。

夫輕諾必寡信，多易必多難。

是以聖人猶難之，故終無難矣。

63

wei wu wei,
shi wu shi,
wei wu wei.

da xiao duo shao,
tu nan yu qi yi;
wei da yu qi xi.

tian xia nan shi,
bi zuo yu yi;
tian xia da shi,
bi zuo yu xi.

shi yi sheng ren zhong bu wei da,
gu neng cheng qi da.

fu qing nuo bi gua xin,
duo yi bi duo nan.

shi yi sheng ren you nan zhi,
gu zhong wu nan yi.

63

Act without acting;

do without doing;

taste without tasting.

Make the small big;

make the few many;

repay hatred with goodness.

Prepare for the difficult while it is still easy;

take care of the great while it is still small.

The difficult things in the world arise from the easy;

the great things in the world arise from the small.

And so, by never attempting great things,

those who are enlightened accomplish them.

Those who make rash promises rarely keep their word;

those who think things easy always find them hard.

That is why those who are enlightened treat everything as difficult,

so never meet with problems in the end.

六十四章

其安易持，其未兆易謀，其脆易泮，其微易散。

為之于未有，治之于未亂。

合抱之木，生于毫末；

九層之台，起于累土；

千里之行，始于足下。

為者敗之，持者失之。

是以，聖人無為，故無敗；

無持，故無失。

民之從事，常于几成而敗之。

慎終如始，則無敗事。

是以聖人欲不欲，不貴難得之貨，學不學，復眾人之所過。

以輔萬物自然而不敢為。

64

qi an yi chi;

qi wei zhao yi mou;

qi cui yi pan;

qi wei yi san.

wei zhi yu wei you,

zhi zhi yu wei luan.

he bao zhi mu,

sheng yu hao mo;

jiu ceng zhi tai,

qi yu lei tu;

qian li zhi xing,

shi yu zu xia.

wei zhe bai zhi;

zhi zhe shi zhi.

shi yi, sheng ren

wu wei, gu wu bai;

wu zhi, gu wu shi.

min zhi cong shi,

chang yu ji cheng er bai zhi.

shen zhong ru shi,

ze wu bai shi.

shi yi sheng ren yu bu yu,

64

It is easy to hold on to things at rest;

it is easy to plan for things not yet seen;

it is easy to shatter things that are fragile;

it is easy to scatter things that are small.

Deal with things before they arise;

set things in order before they are troubled.

A tree as big as one's embrace grows from a tiny shoot;

a tower nine storeys high rises from a heap of earth;

a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.

Act, and you will ruin it;

seize hold of it, and you will lose it.

Those who are enlightened never act and therefore ruin nothing;

they never try to seize and therefore lose nothing.

In handling their affairs, people often fail just before success;

be as careful at the end as at the start, and there will be no failure.

Those who are enlightened

desire to be without desire,

do not value precious things,

learn to unlearn their learning,

redeem their fellow beings' faults.

DAODE JING

bu gui nan de zhi huo;
xue bu xue,
fu zhong ren zhi suo guo.
yi fu wan wu zhi zi ran er bu gan wei.

TAO TE CHING

And so they help all living things find their true selves,
without presuming to interfere.

六十五章

古之善為道者，非以明民，將以愚之。

民之難治，以其智多。

故以智治國，國之賊；

不以智治國，國之福。

知此兩者亦稽式。

常知稽式，是謂玄德。

玄德深矣，遠矣，與物反矣，然後乃至大順。

65

qu zhi shan wei dao zhe,
fei yi ming min,
jiang yi yu zhi.
min zhi nan zhi,
yi qi zhi duo.
gu yi zhi zhi guo,
guo zhi zei;
bu yi zhi zhi guo
guo zhi fu.
zhi ci liang zhe yi ji shi.
chang zhi ji shi,
shi wei xuan de.
xuan de shen yi yuan yi,
yu wu fan yi.
ran hou nai zhi da shun.

65

In days gone by, those who knew how to follow the DAO
did not seem enlightened but ignorant.

The reason why people are hard to govern
is because they know too much. **NOTE**

And so to use knowledge to govern a country
is to be its curse.

Not to use knowledge to govern a country
is to be its blessing.

There are two primal principles,
and to understand them always brings the deepest DE.
How hidden, deep and far-reaching DE is.
It makes all things return to their source
and so attain oneness.

六十六章

江海所以能為百谷王者，以其善下之，故能為百谷王。

是以聖人欲上民，必以言下之；

欲先民，必以身后之。

是以聖人居上而民不重，居前而民不害。

是以天下樂推而不厭。

以其不爭，故天下莫能與之爭。

66

jiang hai suo yi neng wei bai gu wang zhe,
 yi qi shan xia zhi,
 gu neng wei bai gu wang.
 shi yi
 yu shang min,
 bi yi yan xia zhi;
 yu xian min,
 bi yi shen hou zhi.
 shi yi sheng ren
 chu shang er min bu zhong;
 chu qian er min bu hai.
 shi yi tian xia le tui er bu yan.
 yi qi bu zheng,
 gu tian xia mo neng yu zhi zheng.

66

The reason why the sea
 is king of all the valleys and the streams
 is because it lies beneath them,
 and so can act as king.

So anyone who wants to rule the people
 must speak humbly to them;
 Anyone who wants to lead the people
 must follow them as if behind.

Those who are enlightened stand above the people,
 and yet the people do not feel weighed down.
 Those who are enlightened stand in front of the people,
 and yet the people do not feel obstructed.

The whole world joyfully supports those who are enlightened
 and never tires of doing so.
 Because those who are enlightened contend with no one,
 no one contends with them.

六十七章

天下皆謂我道大，似不肖。

夫唯大，故似不肖。

若肖，久矣其細也夫！

我有三寶，持而保之：

一曰慈，二曰儉，三曰不敢為天下先。

慈，故能勇；

儉，故能廣；

不敢為天下先，故能成器長。

今舍慈且勇，舍儉且廣，舍后且先，死矣。

夫慈，以戰則勝，以守則固。

天將救之，以慈衛之。

67

tian xia jie wei wo dao da,
 si bu xiao.
 fu wei da, gu si bu xiao.
 ruo xiao,
 jiu yi qi xi ye fu!
 wo you san bao, chi er bao zhi:
 yi yue ci,
 er yue jian,
 san yue bu gan wei tian xia xian.
 ci, gu neng yong,
 jian, gu neng guang,
 bu gan wei tian xia xian, gu neng cheng qi zhang.
 jin she ci qie yong,
 she jian qie guang,
 she hou qie xian,
 si yi.
 fu ci,
 yi zhan ze sheng,
 yi shou ze gu.
 tian jiang jiu zhi, yi ci wei zhi.

67

The whole world says my DAO
 is vast and seems like nothing else.

It is its very vastness
 that makes it seem like nothing else.

If it had seemed like something,
 it long ago would have disappeared.

I have three treasures to hold and guard:
 the first is love;
 the second moderation;
 the third humility.

With love, you can be courageous;
 with moderation, you can open wide your arms;
 with humility, you can be leader of the world.

Yet to be courageous without love,
 to open wide one's arms without moderation,
 to lead without humility –
 is sure to end in death.

So fight in love, and you will win the battle;
 defend in love, and you will keep your strength.
 Heaven will protect all those
 who show such love.

六十八章

善為士者，不武。善戰者，不怒。

善勝敵者，不與。

善用人者，為之下。

是謂不爭之德，是謂用人之力，是謂配天，古之極。

68

shan wei shi zhe bu wu;
shan zhan zhe bu nu;
shan sheng di zhe bu yu;
shan yong ren zhe wei zhi xia.
shi wei bu zheng zhi de,
shi wei yong ren zhi li,
shi wei pei tian,
gu zhi ji.

68

A skilled soldier never is aggressive;

a skilled fighter never is enraged.

A skilled conqueror is never vengeful;

a skilled manager is never proud.

This is called the DE of non-contention;

this is called employing others' strengths;

this is called a harmony with the highest point of heaven.

六十九章

用兵有言：

「吾不敢為主，而為客；

不敢進寸，而退尺。」

是謂行無行，攘無臂，執無兵，乃無敵矣。

禍莫大于輕敵，輕敵几喪吾寶。

故抗兵相若，哀者勝矣。

69

yong bing you yan:

"wu bu gan wei zhu er wei ke,

bu gan jin cun er tui chi."

shi wei

hang wu hang,

rang wu bi,

reng wu di,

zhi wu bing.

huo mo da yu qing di,

qing di ji sang wu bao.

gu kang bing xiang jia,

ai zhe sheng yi.

69

Among soldiers, there is a saying:

do not be the one to first attack, **NOTE**

but rather take up the defence.

Do not advance an inch,

but rather withdraw a foot.

This is known as stepping forward without moving,

seizing without bearing arms,

confronting without direct attack,

carrying arms without a weapon.

There is no disaster greater than to underestimate your enemy;

underestimate your enemy and you may lose your treasure.

Yet when opposing armies meet in battle,

it is the one which yields that wins.

七十章

吾言甚易知，甚易行。
天下莫能知，莫能行。
言有宗，事有君。
夫唯無知，是以不我知。
知我者希，則我者貴。
是以聖人被褐而懷玉

70

wu yan shen yi zhi,
shen yi xing.
tian xia mo neng zhi,
mo neng xing.
yan you zong,
shi you jun.
fu wei wu zhi,
shi yi bu wo zhi.
zhi wo zhe xi,
ze wo zhe gui.
shi yi sheng ren
pi he er huai yu.

70

My words are very easy to understand,
and very easy to practise.
Yet no one in the world can understand them
or put them into practice.

My words have an ancient source;
my actions have a master.
It is because they do not know these things
that people do not understand me.

Those who do understand are rare;
but those who follow me I treasure.
Those who are enlightened dress in rough clothes,
but hide precious jade beneath.

七十一章

知不知，上，不知不知，病。
聖人不病，以其病病，是以不病。

71

zhi bu zhi,
shang yi;
bu zhi zhi,
bing ye.
fu wei bing bing,
shi yi bu bing.
sheng ren bu bing,
yi qi bing bing,
shi yi bu bing.

71

Far better to know, yet think one does not know;
to think one knows, and not to know, is a disease.

You must become sick of your sickness
before you cease to be sick.

Those who are enlightened are not sick.
It is because they are sick of their sickness
that they are not sick.

七十二章

民不畏威，則大威至。
無狎其所居，無厭其所生。
夫唯不厭，是以不厭。
是以聖人自知不自見，自愛不自貴。
故去彼取此。

72

min bu wei wei,
ze da wei zhi.
wu xia qi suo ju,
wu yan qi suo sheng.
fu wei bu yan,
shi yi bu yan.
shi yi sheng ren
zi zhi bu zi xian,
zi ai bu zi gui.
gu qu bi qu ci.

72

When people cease to fear mere worldly power,
a greater power will come.

Do not confine the homes where people live **NOTE**
or place burdens on their livelihood.

Only when you do not burden them
will they not be wearied by your burden.

Those who are enlightened
know, but do not flaunt, themselves;
love, but do not exalt, themselves.

They choose what is within, not without.

七十三章

勇于敢，則殺，勇于不敢，則活。

此兩者，或利或害。

天之所惡，孰知其故？

天之道，不爭而善勝，不言而善應，不召而自來，姍然而善謀。

天網恢恢，疏而不失。

73

yong yu gan, ze sha,
yong yu bu gan, ze huo.
ci liang zhe huo li huo hai.
tian zhi suo wu,
shu zhi qi gu?
shi yi sheng ren you nan zhi.
tian zhi dao
bu zheng er shan sheng,
bu yan er shan ying,
bu zhao er zi lai,
chan ran er shan mou.
tian wang hui hui,
shu er bu shi.

73

Reckless bravery leads to death;

careful bravery leads to life.

One leads to good, the other harm.

Heaven hates what it hates:

who knows the reason?

Not even those who are enlightened know why.

The DAO of heaven

does not contend yet overcomes with ease,

does not speak yet communicates with ease,

does not summon yet attracts things naturally,

seems unhurried yet plans with ease.

The net of Heaven is vast.

Its meshes may be wide,

but not a thing slips through.

七十四章

民不畏死，奈何以死懼之？
 若使民常畏死，而為奇者，吾得執而殺之，孰敢？
 常有司殺者殺。
 夫代司殺者殺，是謂代大匠斫。
 夫代大匠斫者，希有不傷其手矣。

74

min bu wei si,
 nai he yi si ju zhi?
 ruo shi min chang wei si,
 er wei qi zhe,
 wu de zhi er sha zhi.
 shu gan?
 chang you si sha zhe sha.
 fu dai si sha zhe sha,
 shi wei dai da jiang zhuo.
 fu dai da jiang zhuo,
 xi you bu shang qi shou zhe yi.

74

If people are not afraid of death,
 how can they be threatened by it?
 But if they always live in fear of death,
 and still continue in their lawlessness,
 we can arrest and kill them.
 Who then would dare?

 And yet there is a Lord of Death whose charge it is to kill.
 To take his place and kill would be
 like carving wood in place of the master carpenter.
 Few would escape without injuring their hands.

七十五章

民之飢，以其上食稅之多，是以飢。
民之不治，以其上之有為，是以不治。
民之輕死，以其上求生之厚，是以輕死。
夫唯無以生為者，是賢于貴生。

75

min zhi ji,
yi qi shang shi shui zhi duo,
shi yi ji.
min zhi nan zhi,
yi qi shang zhi you wei,
shi yi nan zhi.
min zhi qing si,
yi qi shang qiu sheng zhi hou,
shi yi qing si.
fu wei wu yi sheng wei zhe,
shi xian yu gui sheng.

75

Why are the people starving?
Because their rulers devour too much in taxes.
That's why they starve.

Why are the people rebellious?
Because their rulers can't stop interfering.
That's why they rebel.

Why do the people make light of death?
Because they are intent on life.
That's why they make light of death.

Yet those who do not strive to live
are wiser than those who value life.

七十六章

人之生也柔弱，其死也堅強。
草木之生也柔脆，其死也枯槁。
故堅強者死之徒，柔弱者生之徒。
是以兵強則滅，木強則折，強大居下，柔弱居上。

76

ren zhi sheng ye rou ruo,
qi si ye jian qiang.
cao mu zhi sheng ye rou cui,
qi si ye ku gao.
gu
jian qiang zhe si zhi tu,
rou ruo zhe shang zhi tu.
shi yi
bing qiang ze mie,
mu qiang ze zhe.
jian qiang chu xia,
rou ruo chu shang.

76

We are born soft and weak;
we die stiff and hard.
All things – the grass, the trees –
are soft and delicate in life,
but dried and withered when they die.
And so the stiff and hard are friends of Death;
the soft and weak are friends of Life.

An army that cannot yield will be destroyed.
A tree that cannot bend will crack and fall.
And so the mighty and unyielding will be laid low;
the soft and weak will overcome.

七十七章

天之道，其猶張弓歟？
 高者抑之，下者舉之，有餘者損之，不足者補之。
 天之道，損有餘而補不足。
 人之道，則不然：
 損不足以奉有餘。
 孰能有餘以奉天下？
 唯有道者。
 是以聖人為而不恃，功成而不居，其不欲見賢。

77

tian zhi dao,
 qi you zhang gong yu?
 gao zhe yi zhi,
 xia zhe ju zhi,
 you yu zhe sun zhi,
 bu zu zhe bu zhi.
 tian zhi dao
 sun you yu er bu bu zu,
 ren zhi dao ze bu ran,
 sun bu zu yi feng you yu.
 shu neng you yu yi feng tian xia?
 wei you dao zhe.
 shi yi sheng ren
 wei er bu shi,
 gong cheng er bu chu,
 qi bu yu xian xian.

77

The DAO of heaven is like the stretching of a bow.
 If it is too high, it is pulled down;
 if too low, it is raised up.
 If it overshoots, it is cut back;
 if it undershoots, it is made longer.

The DAO of heaven takes away from what is overmuch
 and gives to what is not enough.

The way of humankind is different:
 they take away from those who do not have enough
 and offer it to those who have too much.

Who could offer to the world all that they have, and more?
 Only a follower of DAO.

Those who are enlightened
 act but do not expect reward,
 complete the task but do not stop there,
 have no wish to flaunt their worthiness.

七十八章

天下莫柔弱于水，而攻堅強者莫之能勝，以其無以易之。

弱之勝強，柔之勝剛，天下莫不知，莫能行。

是以聖人云：

「受國之垢，是謂社稷主。

受國不祥，是為天下王。」

正言若反。

78

tian xia mo rou ruo yu shui,
er gong jian qiang zhe mo zhi neng sheng,
qi wu yi yi zhi.
ruo zhi sheng qiang,
rou zhi sheng gang,
tian xia mo bu zhi,
mo neng xing.
shi yi sheng ren yun:
shou guo zhi gou,
shi wei she ji zhu;
shou guo bu xiang,
shi wei tian xia wang.
zheng yan ruo fan.

78

There is nothing in the world
as soft and weak as water.
But to erode the hard and strong,
nothing can surpass it;
nothing can be a substitute.

The weak can overcome the strong;
the soft can overcome the hard.
There is no-one in the world who does not know this,
but there is no-one who can put it into practice.

Those who are enlightened say:
those who bear a nation's disgrace
will become lords of its shrines to earth and grain; **NOTE**
those who bear a nation's misfortune
will become kings under heaven.

True words often seem a paradox. **NOTE**

七十九章

和大怨，必有餘怨，安可以為善？

是以聖人執左契而不責于人。

有德司契，無德司微。

天道無親，恆與善人。

79

he da yuan, bi you yu yuan,
bao yuan yi de,
an ke yi wei shan?
shi yi sheng ren zhi zuo qi
er bu ze yu ren.
you de si qi,
wu de si che.
tian dao wu qin,
chang yu shan ren.

79

When peace is made between great enemies,
some residue of enmity is sure to remain.

What can be done for the good?

Those who are enlightened
mind what they owe others,
not what others owe them. **NOTE**

People of DE keep their promises;
those lacking DE insist on payment.

The DAO of heaven is impartial,
but it is always in accord with what is good.

八十章

小邦寡民。

使有什伯之器而不用；

使民重死而不遠徙。

雖有舟輿，無所乘之；

雖有甲兵，無所陳之。

使民復結繩而用之。

甘其食，美其服，安其居，樂其俗。

鄰邦相望，雞犬之聲相聞，民至老死，不相往來。

80

xiao guo gua min.

shi you shi bo zhi qi er bu yong;

shi min zhong si er bu yuan xi;

sui you zhou yu,

wu suo chang zhi;

sui you jia bing,

wu suo chen zhi.

shi ren fu jie sheng er yong zhi.

zhi zhi zhi ji,

gan qi shi,

mei qi fu,

an qi ju,

le qi su,

lin guo xiang wang,

ji quan zhi sheng xiang wen,

min zhi lao si, bu xiang wang lai.

80

Countries should be small,

their people few.

If they have devices by the hundred, **NOTE**

they should not use them.

They should be mindful of death,

and not migrate to far-off places.

Even if they have boats and carriages,

they should have no reason to ride in them.

Even if they have armour and weapons,

they should have no reason to display them.

Let the people return to tying knots in ropes

and using them for counting.

Let them delight in their food,

find their clothes beautiful,

be content with their homes,

rejoice in their everyday lives.

Even if neighbouring countries

are in sight of each other,

and barking dogs and crowing cocks

in earshot,

let the people grow old and die

without needing to go and visit.

八十一章

信言不美，美言不信。

善者不辯，辯者不善。

知者不博，博者不知。

聖人不積，既以為人已愈有，既以與人已愈多。

天之道，利而不害。

聖人之道，為而不爭。

81

xin yan bu mei,

mei yan bu xin.

shan zhe bu bian,

bian zhe bu shan.

zhi zhe bu bo,

bo zhe bu zhi.

sheng ren bu ji,

ji yi wei ren ji yu you,

ji yi yu ren ji yu duo.

tian zhi dao,

li er bu hai.

sheng ren zhi dao,

wei er bu zheng.

81

Truthful words are not fine-sounding;

fine-sounding words are never true.

Good people are not quarrelsome;

quarrelsome people are not good.

Those who understand are not learned;

learned people do not understand.

Those who are enlightened do not hoard.

The more they do for others,

the fuller they are themselves.

The more they give to others,

the richer they become.

The DAO of Heaven never harms, but helps.

The DAO of those who are enlightened

is to act and be in harmony.

NOTES

In addition to the general and specific issues of translation explored in the Introduction, the following notes address special cruxes, identified by ‘section’ number, the *pinyin* Romanised text, and the translation presented here. Click on **RETURN** to be taken back to the original text.

2 **yin sheng**: text and voice

Although both *yin* and *sheng* have clear musical connotations, the exact contrast here is harder to establish. *Yin* has been variously translated as ‘tone/note/sound/pitch/treble’, and *sheng* as ‘voice/melody/mood/silence’. Since the two terms must be in some kind of opposition to each other, given the immediately preceding contrasts, the difference between the written word (‘text’) and the sung or spoken word (‘voice’) may offer a reasonable interpretation. **RETURN**

2 **qian hou xiang sui**: before and after follow one another

qian and *hou* can also be translated as ‘front’ and ‘back’, or ‘future’ and ‘past’. Whichever rendering is preferred, the underlying image is of the unbroken cycle of a circle, where any moment of time, or any point in space, are simultaneously both before and after all other moments and points in the circle. **RETURN**

5 **chu gou**: dispassionately...equally

the literal meaning of *chu gou* is ‘straw dogs’, a reference to the ritual whereby a straw dog is treated with the greatest care and deference before being offered up in sacrifice, only to be discarded and trampled upon once it has served its purpose. The image conveys the sublime impartiality of heaven and earth, as well as of those who are enlightened, towards all living things. **RETURN**

NOTES

12 **wu se...wu yin...wu we**: too many colours...notes...tastes

literally, *wu* means ‘five’. *Wu se* [the five colours] are red, yellow, green, white, and black. *Wu yin* [the five notes] are the five notes of the Chinese musical scale (C, D, E, G, A, in Western notation). *Wu we* [the five tastes] are salty, sweet, bitter, sour, and pungent. By extension, *wu* also takes on a wider meaning of ‘numerous/many/too many/all’, which is the sense adopted here. The overall implication of the lines is that too much involvement with sensory experience will cause inner truth to atrophy.

RETURN

13 **chong ru ruo jing, gui da huan ruo shen**: favour and disgrace both cause anxiety / High rank, just like the body, causes great troubles

These are some of the most difficult characters to translate in the entire text, which may itself be corrupt at this point. The absence of word-inflections, conjunctions, and auxiliary verbs in the original mean that *chong ru*, for example, can be construed as ‘favour *and* disgrace’, ‘favour *is a* disgrace’, ‘one should *favour* [i.e. welcome] *disgrace*’. Similarly, *gui da huan* can be interpreted as ‘high rank *and* great trouble’, ‘high rank *is a* great trouble’, ‘one should *rank* great trouble *highly* [i.e. not minimise it]’. The translation here attempts to present a reasonably coherent meaning, though the implications of the words still remain elusive. **RETURN**

20 **ye zai!...zhao zhao...hun hun...cha cha...men men**: indeed indeed...bright bright...dark dark...sharp sharp...dull dull

Chinese often conveys intensives by repeating words, as above. Since such repetition is not a natural English idiom, the intensives in these lines are translated either by ‘so very’ (‘Ordinary people are *so very* bright’) or by adding a closely related adjective (‘I alone seem *dull and dark*’). **RETURN**

21 **yi ci**: by means of it

the Chinese here (which is repeated in the final line of section 54) may appear particularly bald and gnomical, literally meaning ‘by this’. Several translators have attempted to clarify the uncertainty by various elaborations: ‘by what is within me’, ‘by inward knowledge’, ‘by intuition’, ‘exactly by this phenomenon’, ‘by the nature of the DAO’, and so forth. It may seem best, though, to retain the ambiguity. If the ‘it’ is indeed the DAO, it is after all unnameable. **RETURN**

25 ren: humankind

literally, *ren* means ‘man’. But an alternative character presented in some texts is *wang*, specifically meaning ‘the king/royalty’ but also, more broadly and figuratively, ‘the best of...the highest of...the most representative’. The denotation and connotations of the word ‘humankind’ may evoke the implications of both Chinese characters. [RETURN](#)

26 zi zhong: the laden baggage-cart

almost certainly, the image here has a metaphorical resonance, suggestive of some unspecified inner resource or treasure. However heavy or burdensome it may be, it is to be preferred before the glories of the material world, and both protected and nourished. [RETURN](#)

42 fu yin er bao yang: carries on its back the shade of *yin* / and in its arms the sun of *yang*

the reference here is, of course, to the fundamental contrast and duality between *yin*, the negative, female principle, and *yang*, the active, male principle. A simple translation of the five Chinese characters would be ‘carries *yin* but enfolds *yang*’. However, such a baldly stated contrast can be effectively developed by drawing in two closely implied antitheses: ‘shade’ and ‘sun’, and ‘on its back’ and ‘in its arms’. And so the version here reads, ‘carries on its back the shade of *yin* / and in its arms the sun of *yang*’.

[RETURN](#)

52 se qui dui: block up all the openings

dui has the meaning of ‘mouth/opening/passage/aperture/hole’, and in this context refers to the physical and metaphorical openings through which the senses operate. *Dui* is paralleled in the next line by *men* (gate/door), a similar image of the passage-way of the senses. [RETURN](#)

53 shi wei dao yu: this is the arrogance of thieves

there is a pun here on the word *dao* (or *tao*), which can mean ‘robber’ or ‘thief’, as well as the unnameable ‘Way’. The play on words occurs on three other occasions in the text (sections 3, 19 and 57), though arguably with a lesser emphasis than here. [RETURN](#)

54 yi ci: by means of it

see section 21 above. [RETURN](#)

55 xiang: an omen of disaster

xiang is particularly ambiguous character, since it can also mean the exact opposite of ‘disaster’: ‘blessing/good omen/propitious/beneficial’. All depends upon how the three characters immediately preceding (*yi sheng yue*) are translated. If positively (for example, ‘to increase life’, ‘that which is beneficial to life’, ‘improvement in health’), the obvious choice of apposition is ‘is a blessing’. But if the characters are rendered negatively (‘to force the growth of things’, ‘to hasten life’s growth unnaturally’, ‘to benefit one’s own life’), then ‘disaster’ is the equally obvious conclusion. I view *xiang* in this latter light, since the immediately following lines focus upon different kinds of excess, which are viewed negatively, and which are explicitly said to be ‘against the DAO’. [RETURN](#)

56 men: doors

as in section 51 above, *men* has metaphorical rather than literal force, indicating the doors or gates through which the senses operate. [RETURN](#)

60 sheng ren yi bu shang ren: those who are enlightened do not harm them either

a problematic rendering, since it raises the question, ‘why should those who are enlightened ever be considered to harm people in the first place?’ The difficulty of answering this point has led some translators to follow ‘those who are enlightened’ with a passive rather than an active voice: ‘those who are enlightened are not harmed either *or* are protected also’. Why such a statement should be made at this point, though, is equally unclear. [RETURN](#)

62 zhi san gong: the three ministers installed

the three ministers, according to Star [see Further Reading and Links section], were the grand tutor, the grand preceptor, and the grand protector. [RETURN](#)

65 qi zhi duo: because they know too much

zhi here has the sense of formal, mental, academic knowledge, rather than knowledge derived from the emotions or from life itself. [RETURN](#)

69 wu bu gan wei zhu er wei ke: do not be the one to first attack, / but rather take up the defence

the basic meaning of *zhu* and *ke* in these lines is ‘host’ and ‘guest’. The sense of a ‘host’ as active and energising, and of a ‘guest’ as passive and receiving, leads by extension of meaning to the contrast between attacker and defender. [RETURN](#)

72 wu xia qi suo ju: do not confine the homes where people live

often interpreted as political advice to a ruler, these lines have also been construed figuratively, either as a metaphor for the body (i.e. ‘do not limit your identity to your mere physicality’) or for the heart (i.e. ‘do not limit your heart’, ‘do not withhold your humanity from others’). [RETURN](#)

78 she ji zhu: lords of its shrines to earth and grain

the phrase *she ji zhu* has been variously phrased by translators (‘lord of the community’, ‘gods of millet and earth’, ‘Master of the Altar of Soil and Grain’, ‘lord of its soil shrines’, ‘lord of the earth’s sacrifices’, ‘lord of every offering’). The version here seeks to evoke both the religious (‘shrine’) and the physical (‘earth’ and ‘grain’) aspects of the position. [RETURN](#)

78 zheng yan ruo fan: true words often seem a paradox

not for the first time in the text, this line seems unconnected with the rest of the section, although its actual meaning is acknowledged throughout the *Daode jing*. Some interpreters have either moved the line to section 41 or 45, or eliminated it altogether. [RETURN](#)

79 zhi zuo qi: mind what they owe others

literally, *zhi zuo qi* means ‘holds the left-hand side of the contract’, a reference to the ancient Chinese practice of recording a loan of money. The

sum involved was drawn on a bamboo stick, which was then broken in half lengthwise, so creating two pieces that interlocked with each other. The left-hand side marked the side of the debtor, the right-hand the side of the creditor. [RETURN](#)

80 shi you shi bo zhi: even if they have devices by the hundred

the character *zhi* here is ambiguous, and has been variously interpreted as evoking a domestic level (‘implements’, ‘utensils’, ‘vessels’), more military connotations (‘tools’, ‘machines’, ‘weapons’), to high human ability (‘people of enormous talent’). The choice of ‘devices’ here may be thought to occupy a middle ground between the extremes and, in its generalised meaning, to retain the ambiguity of the original. [RETURN](#)

FURTHER READING AND LINKS

The literature on the *Daode jing* is vast (entering simply the old title *Tao Te Ching* on Google currently [2005] yields over 300,000 references, for example). Of necessity, the following bibliography is severely restricted to those items I have found especially valuable.

Translations with original Chinese text

- Carus, Paul, and D.T. Suzuki *The Canon of Reason and Virtue: Lao Tzu's Tao Teh King*. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publications, 1913.
- Lau, D.C. *Tao Te Ching*, Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1982 (rev. of earlier edition without Chinese text, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963).
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- Waley, Arthur *The Way and its Power: A Study of the Tao Te Ching and Its Place in Chinese Thought*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1934.
- Wilhelm, Richard *Tao Te Ching*, trans. H.G. Ostwald. London: Arkana/Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.

Commentaries on translating

The introductions or prefaces to many of the editions above often explore the problems of translating the *Daode jing*, though at varying length and with varying rigour. For two recent valuable discussions, see

Julian Pas, 'Recent Translations of the Tao-te ching', *Journal of Chinese Religions*, 18 (1990), 127-41.

Michael LaFargue and Julian Pas, 'On Translating the Tao-te-ching', in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, eds. Livia Kohn and Michael La Fargue. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Internet links

I have found five sites particularly notable for the breadth and excellence of their coverage:

<http://home.pages.at/onkellotus>

a remarkable resource, which contains original and *pinyin* versions of the text in 13 different formats. 125 different translations in 21 languages can also be accessed, and it is possible to compare sections from up to four different translations side by side.

<http://www.bopsecrets.org/gateway/passages/tao-te-ching.htm>

a fascinating collection of over a hundred translations of the first section of the *Daode jing*, in both prose and verse. The translations currently date from 1868 to 2004.

<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/gthursby/taoism/index.htm>

the Taoism Information Page presents, amongst much other material, some 20 varied translations of the entire text, together with a helpful comparison of versions of a single section (no. 8).

http://www.geocities.com/dao_house/laozi.htm

a rich site, which provides numerous links to the religious, political and cultural contexts of the *Daode jing*, together with many links to other translations.

<http://www.eng.taoism.org.hk>

based in Hong Kong, this website contains helpful information about the Daoist tradition and its history, as well as indicating further useful links.