



道 德 經

Book One

1

The Dao that can be told is not the eternal Dao.
The name that can be named is not the eternal name

The nameless (*wuming*) is the beginning of heaven and earth.
The named is the mother of the ten thousand things.

Ever desireless (*wu-yu*), one can see the mystery.
Ever desiring, one sees the manifestations.

These two spring from the same source but differ in name; this appears as darkness

Darkness within darkness
The gate to all mystery.

the unnameable *dao* 道

problem with naming
Confucius emphasized the “rectification of names”

正名
Zhengming

Laozi begins by emphasizing the nameless

無名
Wuming

wu —without, free of, not having, empty of, non-being, non-existence

a mind free of thought (*wuyu*)

yu thought constructs, mental patterns, desires

wuyu non-desire, objectless desire, a desire which does not seek to possess

other *wu*-forms prominent in the text:

wuwei non-action, non-coercive action, unforced action
actions that are spontaneous (*ziran*)

wuzhi non-knowledge, unwisdom, unfix wisdom?

無智
Wuzhi

xuantong —deep and mysterious, enigmatic unity

miao —essence, mystery, wonder

zhong —all, everything

2

Under heaven all can see beauty as beauty only
because there is ugliness.
All can know good as good only because there is evil.
Therefore having and not having arise together.
Difficult and easy complement each other.
Long and short contrast each other;
Voice and sound harmonize each other;
Front and back follow one another.

Therefore the sage goes about doing nothing,
teaching no-talking.
The ten thousand things rise and fall without cease,
Creating, yet not possessing,
Working, yet not taking credit.
Work is done, then forgotten.
Therefore it last forever.

3

Not exalting the gifted prevents quarreling.
Not collecting treasures prevents stealing.
Not seeing desirable things prevents confusion of the
heart.
The wise therefore rule by emptying hearts and
stuffing bellies, by weakening ambitions and
strengthening bones.
If men lack knowledge (wuzhi) and desire (wuyu), then
clever people will not try to interfere.
If nothing is done (wuwei), then all will be well.

4

The Dao is an empty vessel;
it is used, but never filled.
Oh, unfathomable source of the ten thousand things!
Blunt the sharpness,
Untangle the knot,
Soften the glare,
Merge with dust,
Oh, hidden deep but ever present!
I do not know from whence it comes
It is the forefather of the gods.

5

Heaven and earth are impartial;
They see the ten thousand things as straw dogs.
The wise are impartial;
They see the people as straw dogs.
The space between heaven and earth is like a
bellows.
The shape changes but not the form;
The more it moves, the more it yields.
More words count less.
Hold fast to the center.

the oscillation of *yin* and *yang* is the movement of *dao*

陽

Yang

male
brightness
something
doing something
knowledge
full
above
before
moving
big
strong
hard
straight



陰

Yin

female
darkness
nothing
doing nothing
ignorance
empty
below
behind
still
small
weak
soft
bent

The sage (*shengren*) goes about doing nothing (*wuwei*)

聖人

Shengren
(Sheng jen)

無為

Wuwei

the wise (*shengren*) rules by emptying/stilling/calming heart-mind

心

Xin
(Hsin)

Dao Chong (dao is empty, or like an empty cup)
introduction of the theme of *emptiness*
the *dao* is empty in the sense that it cannot be exhausted
the inexhaustible cup
no names can capture it
Ivanhoe's translation:
"Heaven and earth are not benevolent (*ren*)" 仁

heaven (*tian*) is treated in the *Daodejing*
as the impersonal forces of nature

天

or the regular operations of the natural world
tian is often used as an abbreviation for
tiandi "Heaven and earth"
Graham has "Heaven and earth are ruthless . . . the sage is ruthless" in
treating the people as straw dogs (*Disputers of the Tao*, p. 231)
nature treats everything the same
human beings are not singled out as special
sages model nature in being not *ren*
in treating all people the same

6

The valley spirit never dies;
It is the woman, primal mother.
Her gateway is the root of heaven and earth.
It is like a veil barely seen.
Use it; it will never fail.

The valley spirit is called *xuanpin*
xuan (mysterious, profound, secret, dark)
pin (woman, mother, womb)
the “hidden creator,” the enigmatic or “dark female”
men tiandi—gate of Heaven and Earth
the image of the “portal” or “gateway” of the female
used as analogy for the source or the “root”
of Heaven and earth (or all things)

7

Heaven and earth last forever.
Why do heaven and earth last forever?
They are unborn,
So ever living.
The sage stays behind, thus he is ahead.
He is detached, thus at one with all.
Through selfless action, he attains fulfillment.

once again, the sages model themselves on “Heaven and earth”
the *dao* of Laozi is to tune into nature
in putting himself last the comes out first

Graham: “Heaven and earth last forever because, unlike man, they do not try to prolong their existence . . . if the sage in his perfect unselfishness is no longer distinguishing himself from heaven and earth is he not in some sense participating in their immortality” (*Disputers of the Tao*, p. 230)

8

The highest good is like water.
Water gives life to the ten thousand things and does not strive.
It flows in places men reject and so is like the Dao.
In dwelling, be close to the land.
In meditation, go deep in the heart.
In dealing with others, be gentle and kind.
In speech, be true.
In ruling, be just.
In daily life, be competent.
In action, be aware of the time and the season.
No fight: No blame.

now the metaphor of water is introduced
Alan Watts’s book on Daoism bears the title *The Watercourse Way*

some advice for the good life:
“always knowing where to be, committing ourselves utterly in our relationships, being generous in our transactions, making good on what we say, being successful both in service and in governance, and seizing the moment.”

[Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *The Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), p.88]

“go deep in the heart”

“In hearts, the good lies in depth” (Ivanhoe)

xin heart/mind
shan good/best, excellent
yuan deep, profound, still like deep water

Shan

9

Better stop short than fill to the brim.
Oversharpen the blade, and the edge will soon blunt.
Amass a store of gold and jade, and no one can protect it.
Claim wealth and titles, and disaster will follow.
Retire when the work is done.
This is the way of heaven.

the *dao* of *tian*
is to stop short before overdoing it

10

Carrying body and soul and embracing the one.
Can you avoid separation?
Attending fully and becoming supple,
Can you be as a newborn babe?
Washing and cleansing the primal vision,
Can you be without stain?
Loving all men and ruling the country,

here “attending fully” is, as Ivanhoe has it,
“concentrating your *qi*”

“much of the *Daodejing* can be read as a metaphor for breathing exercises” (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 90)

qi

Can you be without cleverness?
 Opening and closing the gates of heaven,
 Can you play the role of woman?
 Understanding and being open to all things,
 Are you able to do nothing (*wu-wei*)?

Giving birth and nourishing,
 Bearing yet not possessing,
 Working yet not taking credit,
 Leading yet not dominating.
 This is the Primal Virtue (*de*).

11

Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub;
 It is the center hole that makes it useful.
 Shape clay into a vessel;
 It is the space within that makes it useful.

Cut doors and windows for a room;
 It is the hole which make it useful.
 Therefore benefit comes from what is there;
 Usefulness from what is not there.

12

The five colors blind the eye.
 The five tones deafen the ear.
 The five flavors dull the taste.
 Racing and hunting madden the mind.
 Precious things lead one astray.
 Therefore the sage is guided by what he feels and
 not by what he sees.
 He lets go of that and chooses this.

13

Accept disgrace willingly.
 Accept misfortune as the human condition.
 What do you mean by "Accept disgrace willingly"?
 Accept being unimportant.
 Do not be concerned with loss or gain.
 This is called "accepting disgrace willingly."
 What do you mean by "Accept misfortune as the
 human condition"?
 Misfortune comes from having a body.
 Without a body, how could there be misfortune?
 Surrender yourself humbly; then you can be trusted
 to care for all things.
 Love the world as your own self; then you can truly
 care for all things.

14

Look, it cannot be seen—it is beyond form.
 Listen, it cannot be heard—it is beyond sound.
 Grasp, it cannot be held—it is intangible.
 These three are indefinable;

Graham on *wuwei*:

"This term, which goes back to Confucius, is often translated by such innocuous phrases as 'non-action' to avoid giving the impression that Taoist recommend idleness, but it seems better to keep the paradoxical force of the Chinese expression. *Wei* is ordinary human action, deliberated for a purpose, in contrast to the spontaneous processes of nature which are 'so of themselves.' Man takes pride in distinguishing himself from nature by his purposive action; *Lao-tzu* by a classic reversal describes the behaviour of the sage as Doing Nothing" (*Disputers of the Tao*, 232).
wuzhi also appears but gets lost in translation

the key to all procreation or creativity
 (giving birth and nourishing)
 is producing but not possessing
 this is the enigmatic or profound *de*

the value of emptiness
 it is the center hole, the emptiness (*wu*) that makes it useful
 the empty hub of a wheel
 the emptiness of a clay vessel

無
wu

one may profit from what is present
 but what is not present is more valuable

the five colors, tones, flavors refers to conventional tastes
 what is important is to prevent the vital *qi*
 from being dissipated through the maddening rush of society

Ivanhoe: "sages are for the belly and not for the eye"
 the belly is easily satiated but the eye always wants more

Ivanhoe: "Revere calamity as you revere your own body"

a number of stories in the *Zhuangzi* develop this theme
 of accepting misfortune as being key to attuning to the *dao*

this last verse an echo of Yang Zhu
 Ames and Hall's translation:
 "Thus those who value the care of their own persons more than running
 the world can be entrusted with the world. And those who begrudge
 their persons as though they were the world can be put in charge of the
 world" (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 93).
 this passage will also occur in the *Zhuangzi*

the *dao* is again ungraspable and unnameable
 indefinable

Therefore they are joined in one.
 From above it is not bright;
 From below it is not dark:
 An unbroken thread beyond description.
 It returns to nothingness.
 The form of the formless,
 The image of the imageless,
 It is called indefinable and beyond imagination.
 Stand before it and there is no beginning.
 Follow it and there is no end.
 Stay with the ancient Dao,
 Move with the present.
 Knowing the ancient beginning is the essence of Dao.

the formless form
 the image of no thing

thread of the *dao* is the ability to know the ancient beginnings
 i.e., the origin of things out of emptiness

15

The ancient masters were subtle, mysterious,
 profound, responsive.
 The depth of their knowledge is unfathomable.
 Because it is unfathomable,
 All we can do is describe their appearance.
 Watchful, like men crossing a winter stream.
 Alert, like men aware of danger.
 Courteous, like visiting guests.
 Yielding, like ice about to melt.
 Simple, like uncarved blocks of wood.
 Hollow, like caves.
 Opaque, like muddy pools.
 Who can wait quietly while the mind settles?
 Who can remain still until the moment of action?
 Observers of the Dao do not seek fulfillment.
 Not seeking fulfillment, they are not swayed by desire
 for change.

a description of
 “Those of old who were good at forging their *dao* in the world”
 (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 97).

Ivanhoe:
 the “unhewn wood” is a symbol for anything in its natural state

16

Empty yourself of everything.
 Let the mind become still.
 The ten thousand things rise and fall while the Self
 watches their return.

 They grow and flourish and then return to the source.
 Returning to the source is stillness, which is the way of
 nature.

 The way of nature is unchanging.
 Knowing constancy is insight.
 Not knowing constancy leads to disaster.
 Knowing constancy, the mind is open.
 With an open mind, you will be openhearted.
 Being openhearted, you will act royally,
 Being royal, you will attain the divine.
 Being divine, you will be at one with the Dao.
 Being at one with the Dao is eternal.
 And though the body dies, the Dao will never pass
 away.

translation differs greatly here
 Ivanhoe:
 “returning to one’s destiny is known as constancy”

“To embody the Way is to be long lived,
 And one will avoid danger to the end of one’s days”

17

The very highest is barely known.
 Then comes that which people know and love,
 Then that which is feared,
 Then that which is despised.
 Who does not trust enough will not be trusted.
 When actions are performed
 Without unnecessary speech,
 People say, "We did it!"

18

When the great Dao is forgotten,
 Kindness and morality arise.
 When wisdom and intelligence are born,
 The great pretence begins,
 When there is no peace within the family,
 Filial piety and devotion arise.
 When the country is confused and in chaos,
 Loyal ministers appear.

19

Give up sainthood, renounce wisdom,
 And it will be a hundred times better for everyone.
 Give up kindness, renounce morality,
 And men will rediscover filial piety and love.
 Give up ingenuity, renounce profit,
 And bandits and thieves will disappear.
 These three are outward forms alone; they are not
 sufficient in themselves.
 It is more important
 To see the simplicity,
 To realize one's true nature,
 To cast off selfishness
 And temper desire.

20

Give up learning, and put an end to your troubles.
 Is there a difference between yes and no?
 Is there a difference between good and evil?
 Must I fear what others fear? What nonsense!

Other people are contented, enjoying the sacrificial
 feast of the ox.
 In spring some go to the park, and climb the terrace.
 But I alone am drifting, not knowing where I am.
 Like a newborn babe before it learns to smile,
 I am alone, without a place to go.

Others have more than they need, but I alone have
 nothing.
 I am a fool. Oh, yes! I am confused.
 Others are clear and bright,
 But I alone am dim and weak.

Others are sharp and clever,
 But I alone am dull and stupid.

"The greatest of rulers is but a shadowy presence"
 advice to the ruler is to leave well enough alone
 a kind of political anarchism
 still acknowledges the need for political structures
 but the best order is the absence of coercion

here, clearly, a response to Confucianism
 only when *dao* is forgotten do *ren* and *yi* arise
 when wisdom (*zhi*) and intelligence (?) appears,
 there is hypocrisy
xiao appears only when the state is in chaos

cutt off sageliness (*sheng*), abandon wisdom (*zhi*)

cutt off *ren*, renounce *yi*
 and then the people will return to *xiao*

it is more important to be genuine and simple
 rather than emphasizing *sheng*, *zhi*, *ren*, and *yi*

a contrast between other people and the Daoist sage
 while everyone else is bright and merry
 the sage is still and inactive
 like a child yet to smile

the multitude have abundance
 the sage has nothing

"Rather than finding their nourishment at the marble temple of learning,
 the Daoists remain contented at the mother's breast, suckled on the rich

Oh, I drift like the waves of the sea,
 Without direction, like the restless wind.
 Everyone else is busy,
 But I alone am aimless and depressed.
 I am different.
 I am nourished by the great mother.

21

The greatest Virtue (*de*) is to follow *Dao* and *Dao*
 alone.
 The *Dao* is elusive and intangible.
 Oh, it is intangible and elusive, and yet within is image.
 Oh, it is dim and dark, and yet within is essence.
 This essence is very real, and therein lies faith.

From the very beginning until now its name has never
 been forgotten.
 Thus I perceive the creation.
 How do I know the ways of creation?
 Because of this.

22

Yield and overcome;
 Bend and be straight;
 Empty and be full;
 Wear out and be new;
 Have little and gain;
 Have much and be confused.
 Therefore the wise embrace the one
 And set an example to all.
 Not putting on a display,
 They shine forth.
 Not justifying themselves,
 They are distinguished,
 Not boasting,
 They receive recognition.
 Not bragging,
 They never falter.
 They do not quarrel,
 So no one quarrels with them.
 Therefore the ancients say, "Yield and overcome."
 Is that an empty saying?
 Be really whole,
 And all things will come to you.

23

To talk little is natural.
 High winds do not last all morning.
 Heavy rain does not last all day.
 Why is this? Heaven and earth!
 If heaven and earth cannot make things eternal,
 How is it possible for man?
 He who follows the *Dao*
 Is at one with the *Dao*.

milk of immediate experience and unmediated feeling" (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 106).

those of great character (*de*) follow the *dao*
 but the *dao* is elusive
 as Graham puts it:

"You can get nearer and nearer to discerning it first as an image or model, then as taking shape as a thing, yet it is itself the indefinite out of which the thing defines itself" (*Disputers of the Tao*, p. 221).

instead of "essence" Ames and Hall have
 "seminal concentrations of *qi*" (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 107)

its name has never left it or been forgotten
 not because it has an eternal name
 "Praise for way-making has never ceased" (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 107).

the movement of reversal again

what is meant by the sages embracing the one?
 seeing the whole, the oscillations of *yin* and *yang*?
 Graham: "*Lao-tzu* frequently calls the undivided the One, although generally in relation to the man or thing which 'embrace the One' or 'grasps the One'. As a name however the One is no more adequate than any other. As soon as you try to conceive the Way you conceive the One, but as soon as you conceive the One you conceive the many" (*Disputers of the Tao*, p. 222).

a concern with the problem of language pervades the text
 Hansen sees the *Daodejing* as part of an "anti-language" stage of Daoism: "Since language is an instrument of social control, we should avoid it—and everything that goes with it" (*A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*, 211).

Ames and Hall find this interpretation to be perhaps going too far throwing the baby out with the bathwater nevertheless
 "While we might find a palpable irony in one of the world's literary classics offering a critique of the language in which it is written, it is undeniably the case that a major theme of the *Daodejing* is that an uncritical use of language can lull us into a distorted understanding of

He who is virtuous (de)
 Experiences Virtue (de).
 He who loses the way (Dao)
 Is lost.
 When you are one with the Dao.
 The Dao welcomes you.
 When you are not at one with Virtue (de).
 The Virtue is always there.
 When you are at one with loss,
 The loss is experienced willingly.
 He who does not trust enough
 Will not be trusted.

24

He who stands on tiptoe is not steady.
 He who strides cannot maintain the pace.
 He who makes a show is not enlightened.
 He who is self-righteous is not respected.
 He who boasts achieves nothing.
 He who brags will not endure.
 According to followers of the Dao, “these are extra
 food and unnecessary baggage.”
 They do not bring happiness.
 Therefore followers of the Dao avoid them.

25

Something mysteriously formed,
 Born before heaven and earth.
 In the silence and the void,
 Standing alone and unchanging,
 Ever present and in motion.
 Perhaps it is the mother of the ten thousand things.
 I do not know its name
 Call it Dao.
 For lack of a better word, I call it great.

Being great, it flows.
 It flows far away.
 Having gone far, it returns.

Therefore, “Dao is great;
 Heaven (tian) is great;
 Earth is great;
 The king is also great.”
 These are the four great powers of the Universe,
 And the king is one of them.

Man follows the earth.
 Earth follows heaven.
 Heaven follows the Dao.
 Dao follows what is natural (ziran).

26

The heavy is the root of the light;
 The still is the master of unrest.
 Therefore the sage, traveling all day,
 Does not lose sight of his baggage.
 Though there are beautiful things to be seen,

the nature of the world in which we live” (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 112).

自然

Ziran
(Tzu jan)

a description of what the sage in tune with the *dao* is not
 like
 obviously those who try to stand out
 the braggarts and blowhards who try so hard to make a show
 are “not enlightened”
 Ivanhoe: “are not illustrious”
 Ames and Hall: “do not shine”

25 is a well-known chapter

Ames and Hall provide a caution about a common reading of this
 chapter as a Chinese creation story or cosmogony
 “A familiar interpretation of this chapter is that it offers one of the
 earliest Chinese cosmogonies, referencing some primal origin behind
 the discriminations of our everyday world. This reading becomes
 problematic if we think in terms of some initial beginning that is
 independent of the process itself. For the Daoist, the flow of experience
 has no beginning and no end” (*Daodejing: A Philosophical
 Translation*, p. 116).

once again, the problem with naming the *dao*
 “*dao*” is not its proper name
 but one can call it “*dao*” or one can call it “great”

the last stanza is significant

Graham:

“An alternative to saying the name ‘Way’ is inadequate is to accept it
 but proceed to identify something still farther back, the first of what if
 continued would be an infinite series. The same stanza ends by picking
 the ‘so of itself’ (*tzu jan*), pure spontaneity” (*Disputers of the Tao*, p.
 226).

again the oscillation of *yin* and *yang*
 the reconcillation of polarities

“This chapter might well be read together with chapters 7 and 13. If

He remains unattached and calm.
 Why should the lord of ten thousand chariots act
 lightly in public?
 To be light is to lose one's root.
 To be restless is to lose one's control.

27

A good walker leaves no tracks;
 A good speaker makes no slips;
 A good reckoner needs no tally.
 A good doctor needs no lock,
 Yet no one can loosen it.

Therefore the sage takes care of all men
 And abandons no one.
 He takes care of all things
 And abandons nothing.

This is called "following the light."

What is a good man?
 A teacher of a bad man.
 What is a bad man?
 A good man's charge.
 If the teacher is not respected,
 And the student not cared for,
 Confusion will arise, however clever one is.
 This is the crux of mystery.

28

Know the strength of man,
 But keep a woman's care!
 Be the stream of the universe!
 Being the stream of the universe,
 Ever true and unswerving,
 Become as a little shild once more.

Know the white,
 But keep the black!
 Be an example to the world!
 Ever true and unwavering,
 Return to the infinite.

Know honor,
 Yet keep humility.
 Be the valley of the universe!
 Being the valley of the universe,
 Ever true and resourceful.
 Return to the state of the uncarved block.

When the block is carved it becomes useful.
 When the sage uses it, he becomes the ruler.
 Thus, "A great tailor cuts little."

29

Do you think you can take over the universe and
 improve it?

rulers treat all things with equal seriousness and respect, their own persons will be taken care of as a matter of course. The way to be rid of such personal concerns is to be rid of the distinction between one's person and the world in which we live" (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 118).

This is called "following the light"

Ivanhoe: "inheriting enlightenment"

Ames and Hall: "following their natural acuity"

what they mean by "acuity" here is the insight that enable one to make the best of whatever situation arises

"In the Daoist worldview, 'evil' is the opposite of efficacy. It is a failure of imagination, the inability to make the most of things, a missed opportunity. It is the failure to recognize and appreciate the worth of both people and things, and as a consequence, to misuse them. There is no need to pick and choose, or to squander anything. For those who are truly proficient at what they do, there is no wastage—nothing left over, no loose ends" (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 120.)

"The continuity between polarities, a persistent theme in the *Daodejing*, is here applied specifically to gender, suggesting that the Daoist image of the most consummate and fertile person is an androgyne who has access to the full range of gender traits" (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 121).

the sage understands the oscillations of *yin* and *yang*

Ames and Hall see the river valley image connected to the fertility of the female expressing the "inexhaustible cosmic fecundity" of the universe

again the image of the uncarved block of wood
 the natural state of the 'so of itself' (*ziran*)

this imagery has had a profound effect upon East Asian aesthetics
 consider the Japanese aesthetic of *wabi sabi*

I do not believe that it can be done.
 The universe is sacred.
 You cannot improve it.
 If you try to change it, you will ruin it.
 If you try to hold it, you will lose it.
 So sometimes things are ahead and sometimes they
 are behind;
 Sometimes breathing is hard, sometimes it comes
 easily;
 Sometimes there is strength and sometimes weakness;
 Sometimes one is up and sometimes down.
 Therefore the sage avoids extremes, excesses, and
 complacency.

30

Whenever you advise a ruler in the way of Dao,
 Counsel him not to use force to conquer the universe.
 For this would only cause resistance.
 Thorn bushes spring up wherever the army has
 passed.
 Lean years follow in the wake of a great war.
 Just do what needs to be done.
 Never take advantage of power.

Achieve results,
 But never glory in them.
 Achieve results,
 But never boast.
 Achieve results,
 But never be proud.
 Achieve results,
 Because this is the natural way.
 Achieve results,
 But not through violence.

Force is followed by loss of strength.
 This is not the way of Dao.
 That which goes against the Dao comes to an early
 end.

31

Good weapons are instruments of fear; all creatures
 hate them.
 Therefore followers of Dao never use them.
 The wise man prefers the left.
 The man of war prefers the right.

Weapons are instruments of fear; they are not a wise
 man's tools.
 He uses them only when he has no choice.
 Peace and quiet are dear to his heart.
 And victory no cause for rejoicing.
 If you rejoice in victory, then you delight in killing.
 If you delight in killing, you cannot fulfill yourself.

On happy occasions precedence is given to the left,
 On sad occasions to the right.
 In the army the general stands on the left,
 The commander-in-chief on the right.

“When the patterns of nature are taken as counsel for political order in the empire, they teach us that human world too will flourish if left to its own internal impulses. Coercive interventions from ‘above,’ while perhaps temporarily efficacious, are, in the long term and in the big picture, a source of destabilization and impoverishment. It is thus that the sagacious rulers stay close to the center, and simply oversee a world that can be relied upon to order itself” (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 123).

Graham:

“Certainly the audience to which *Lao-tzu* (unlike *Chuang-tzu*) is directly addressed to the ruler of a state—a small state, one might guess, which has to bend with the wind to survive among stronger states. Its strategy of retreating before a rising power until it overstretchs itself and passes the point of decline has very practical applications in government, military strategy and wrestling—Japanese *Judō* (‘The Way of Weakness’) is named straight from the terminology of *Lao-tzu*” (*Disputers of the Tao*, p. 234).

this chapter turns to the devastation of war

does the *Daodejing* counsel pacifism?

seems to indicate here that weapons of war might be a necessary evil

but in general wars are not to be celebrated
 cautions about the danger of victory
 celebrating victory might lead to a penchant for war

This means that war is conducted like a funeral.
 When many people are being killed,
 They should be mourned in heartfelt sorrow.
 That is why a victory must be observed like a funeral.

32

The Dao is forever undefined.
 Small though it is in the unformed state, it cannot be grasped.
 If kings and lords could harness it,
 The ten thousand things would naturally obey.
 Heaven and earth would come together
 And gentle rain fall.
 Men would need no more instruction and all things would take their course.

Once the whole is divided, the parts need names.
 There are already enough names.
 One must know when to stop.
 Knowing when to stop averts trouble.
 Dao in the world is like a river flowing home to the sea.

33

Knowing others is wisdom;
 Knowing the self is enlightenment.
 Mastering others requires force;
 Mastering the self needs strength.
 He who knows he has enough is rich.
 Perseverance is a sign of willpower.
 He who stays where he is endures.
 To die but not to perish is to be eternally present.

34

The great Dao flows everywhere, both to the left and to the right.
 The ten thousand things depend upon it; it holds nothing back.
 It fulfills its purpose silently and makes no claim.
 It nourishes the ten thousand things,
 And yet is not their lord.
 It has no aim; it is very small.
 The ten thousand things return to it,
 Yet it is not their lord.
 It is very great.
 It does not show greatness,
 And is therefore truly great.

35

All men will come to him who keeps to the one,
 For there lie rest and happiness and peace.
 Passerby may stop for music and good food,

what would *Laozi* recommend concerning the problem of terrorism?

opening line here is:
dao is wuming is

Ivanhoe's translation picks up that the "unformed state" is again the image of the unhewn wood
 thus connecting *dao*, once again, to *ziran*

the problem with naming again
 too many names

the last line invites discussion
 the same imagery is used in the *Upanishads*
 the river flowing home to the sea represents there the absorption of the self into the Self, the delusion of a separate self into the *Atman*
 which is identical to *Brahman*, the undefinable absolute One behind the illusory veil of the many

Ames and Hall 道 cauti 無名 on that what is going
 on here in the *Dao* *dejing*
 is not a One behind the many, but rather "the
 inseparability of the one and the many" (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 128).

as Ivanhoe points out in the footnotes to this chapter
 this theme of contentment, or knowing when one has enough, runs through the text

if the sages model themselves on the *dao* then . . .

"The effective 'governing' of the sage is analogous to the flourishing of an ecological habitat. The community is self-defining, with its ethos emerging out of the collaboration of its constituents. Sages are simply virtuoso coordinators, getting the most out of their populations without the imposition of any personal agenda. Their 'sagacity' at its most excellent is not only uncelebrated, but even goes unannounced" (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 131).

But a description of the Dao
Seems without substance or flavor.
It cannot be seen, it cannot be heard,
And yet it cannot be exhausted.

36

That which shrinks
Must first expand.
That which fails
Must first be strong.
That which is cast down
Must first be raised.
Before receiving
There must be giving.
This is called perception of the nature of things.
Soft and weak overcome hard and strong.
Fish cannot leave deep waters,
And a country's weapons should not be displayed.

37

Dao abides in non-action (*wuwei*),
Yet nothing is left undone.
If kings and lords observed this,
The ten thousand things would develop naturally.
If they still desired to act,
They would return to the simplicity of formless
substance.
Without form there is no desire.
Without desire there is tranquility.
And in this way all things would be at peace.

Book Two

38

A truly good man is not aware of his goodness,
And is therefore good.
A foolish man tries to be good,
And is therefore not good.
A truly good man does nothing (*wuwei*),
Yet leaves nothing undone.
A foolish man is always doing,
Yet much remains to be done.
When a truly kind man does something, he leaves
nothing undone.
When a just man does something, he leaves a great
deal to be done.
When a disciplinarian does something and no one
responds,
He rolls up his sleeves in an attempt to enforce order.
Therefore when Dao is lost, there is goodness.
When goodness is lost, there is kindness.
When kindness is lost, there is ritual.
Now ritual is the husk of faith and loyalty, the
beginning of confusion.
Knowledge of the future is only a flowery trapping of
Dao.

again the problem of language
to put the *dao* into words is to limit it
to leave it with no flavor

everything that moves to the extreme of *yang*
will become *yin*

the manuscript translated by Ames and Hall is from a recently
discovered (1993) bamboo scroll dated to about 300 BCE
which would make it a very early version of the text
this manuscript has the same opening line as chapter 32:
dao is wuming

the manuscript translated here, and in Ivanhoe has
dao is wuwei

the second book opens with a clear challenge to Confucianism
though it is mostly obscured in this translation
Ivanhoe's translation brings this out better
if, of course, one recognizes
that "Virtue" is *de*
thus "Those of highest *de* do not strive for *de* and so they have it"
"benevolence" as *ren*
"righteousness" as *yi*
"ritually correct" as *li*

Ames and Hall:

"This chapter joins the anti-Confucian polemic of chapters 18 and 19 in
which there is a real concern that the Confucian celebration of

It is the beginning of folly.
 Therefore the truly great man dwells on what is real
 and not what is on the surface.
 On the fruit and not the flower.
 Therefore accept the one and reject the other.

39

These things from ancient times arise from one:
 The sky is whole and clear.
 The earth is whole and firm.
 The spirit is whole and strong.
 The valley is whole and full.
 The ten thousand things are whole and active.
 Kings and lords are whole, and the country is upright.
 All these are in virtue of wholeness.

The clarity of the sky prevents its falling.
 The firmness of the earth prevents its splitting.
 The strength of the spirit prevents its being used up.
 The fullness of the valley prevents its running dry.
 The growth of the ten thousand things prevents their
 dying out.
 The leadership of kings and lords prevents the
 downfall of the country.

Therefore the humble is the root of the noble.
 The low is the foundation of the high.
 Princes and lords consider themselves
 “orphaned,” “widowed,” and “worthless.”
 Do they not depend on being humble?
 Too much success is not an advantage.
 Do not tinkle like jade.
 Or clatter like stone chimes.

40

Returning is the motion of the Dao.
 Yielding is the way of the Dao.
 The ten thousand things are born of being.
 Being is born of not being.

41

The wise student hears of the Dao and practices it
 diligently.
 The average student hears of the Dao and gives it
 thought now and then.
 The foolish student hears of the Dao and laughs
 aloud.
 If there were no laughter, the Dao would not be what
 it is.
 Here it is said:
 The bright path seems dim;
 Going forward seems like retreat;
 The easy way seems hard;
 The highest Virtue (de) seems empty;
 Great purity seems sullied;
 A wealth of Virtue (de) seems inadequate;
 The strength of Virtue (de) seems frail;

increasingly artificial moral percepts will overwhelm the unmediated expression of natural feelings. It is for this reason that the full arsenal of Confucian moral values comes under assault.”

They add however:

“To be fair to the early Confucian tradition, the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, and the recently recovered Confucian document, *Five Modes of Proper Conduct*, all share this purportedly Daoist concern for moral authenticity as an uncontested value” (*Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 137).

Real Virtue (de) seems unreal;
 The perfect square has no corners;
 Great talents ripen later;
 The highest notes are hard to hear;
 The greatest form has no shape.
 The Dao is hidden and without name.
 The Dao alone nourishes and brings everything to fulfillment.

42

The Dao begot one.
 One begot two.
 Two begot three.
 And three begot the ten thousand things.
 The ten thousand things carry yin and embrace yang.
 They achieve harmony by combining these forces.
 Men hate to be “orphaned,” “widowed,” or
 “worthless,”
 But this is how kings and lords describe themselves.
 For one gains by losing
 And loses by gaining.
 What others teach, I also teach; that is:
 “A violent man will die a violent death!”
 This will be the essence of my teaching.

43

The softest thing in the universe
 Overcomes the hardest thing in the universe.
 That without substance can enter where there is no
 room.
 Hence I know the value of non-action (wuwei).
 Teaching without words and work without doing
 Are understood by very few.

44

Fame or self: Which matters more?
 Self or wealth: Which is more precious?
 Gain or loss: Which is more painful?
 He who is attached to things will suffer much.
 He who saves will suffer heavy loss.
 A contented man is never disappointed.
 He who knows when to stop does not find himself in
 trouble.
 He will stay forever safe.

45

Great accomplishment seems imperfect,
 Yet it does not outlive its usefulness.
 Great fullness seems empty,
 Yet it cannot be exhausted.
 Great straightness seems twisted.
 Great intelligence seems stupid.
 Great eloquence seems awkward.
 Movement overcomes cold.
 Stillness overcomes heat.
 Stillness and tranquility set things in order in the

“The text is most interesting on the subject of opposite names. The famous reversal of opposites character of Daoism starts from Laozi’s contrast theory of names. He assumed that names comes in pairs. Opposite terms are “born together.” To have or learn one is to have or learn the other. You cannot have mastered *water* unless you also know what is *not water*. . . . Each pair of terms thus has a single source. *One* distinction gives rise to *two* terms. . . . Knowledge is a mastery of vocabulary, not definitions but spontaneous, conditioned inclinations to discriminate” (*A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*, p. 211).

universe.

46

When the Dao is present in the universe,
The horses haul manure.
When the Dao is absent from the universe,
War horses are bred outside the city.
There is no greater sin than desire,
No greater curse than discontent,
No greater misfortune than wanting something for
oneself.
Therefore he who knows that enough is enough will
always have enough.

47

Without going outside, you may know the whole world.
Without looking through the window, you may see the
ways of heaven.
The farther you go, the less you know.
Thus the sage knows without traveling;
He sees without looking;
He works without doing.

48

In the pursuit of learning, every day something is
acquired.
In the pursuit of Dao, every day something is
dropped.
Less and less is done
Until non-action is achieved.
When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.
The world is ruled by letting things take their course.
It cannot be ruled by interfering.

49

The sage has no mind of his own.
He is aware of the needs of others.
I am good to people who are good.
I am also good to people who are not good.
Because Virtue (de) is goodness.
I have faith in people who are faithful.
I also have faith in people who are not faithful.
Because Virtue (de) is faithfulness.
The sage is shy and humble — to the world he seems
confusing.
Others look to him and listen.
He behaves like a little child.

50

Between birth and death,
Three in ten are followers of life,
Three in ten are followers of death,
And men just passing from birth to death also number
three in ten.
Why is this so?
Because they live their lives on the gross level.

He who knows how to live can walk abroad.
Without fear of rhinoceroses or tiger.
He will not be wounded in battle.
For in him rhinoceroses can find no place to thrust
their horn,
Tigers no place to use their claws,
And weapons no place to pierce.
Why is this so?
Because he has no place for death to enter.

51

All things arise from Dao.
They are nourished by Virtue (de).
They are formed from matter.
They are shaped by environment.
Thus the ten thousand things all respect Dao and
honor Virtue (de).
Respect of Dao and honor of Virtue (de) are not
demanded,
But they are in the nature of things.

Therefore all things arise from Dao.
By Virtue (de) they are nourished,
Developed, cared for,
Sheltered, comforted,
Grown, and protected.
Creating without claiming,
Doing without taking credit,
Guiding without interfering,
This is Primal Virtue (de).

60

Ruling the country is like cooking a small fish.
Approach the universe with Dao,
And evil will have no power.
Not that evil is not powerful,
But its power will not be used to harm others.
Not only will it do no harm to others,
But the sage himself will also be protected.
They do not hurt each other,
And the Virtue (de) in each one refreshes both.

61

A great country is like low land.
It is the meeting ground of the universe,
The mother of the universe.

The female overcomes the male with stillness,
Laying low in stillness.

Therefore if a great country gives way to a smaller
country,
It will conquer the smaller country.
And if a small country submits to a great country,
It can conquer the great country.
Therefore those who would conquer must yield,
And those who conquer do so because they yield.

A great nation need more people,
A small country needs to serve.
Each gets what it wants.
It is fitting for a great country to yield.

74

If men are not afraid to die,
It is of no avail to threaten them with death.

If men live in constant fear of dying,
And if breaking the law means that a man will be killed,
Who will dare to break the law?

There is always an official executioner.
If you try to take his place,
It is like trying to be a master carpenter and cutting
wood.
If you try to cut wood like a master carpenter,
you will only hurt your hand.

77

The Dao of heaven is like the bending of a bow.
The high is lowered, and the low is raised.
If the string is too long, it is shortened;
If there is not enough, it is made longer.

The Dao of heaven is to take from those who have
too much and give to those who do not have enough.
Man's way is different.
He takes from those who do not have enough to give
to those who already have too much.
What man has more than enough and gives it to the
world?
Only the man of Dao.

Therefore the sage works without recognition.
He achieves what has to be done without dwelling on
it.
He does not try to show his knowledge.