


Dao De Jing

Unfiltered Thoughts In Motion

道德經隨筆梳抄

Gordon Pang

The background of the cover is a soft, painterly illustration. At the top, a bright, glowing full moon is set against a pale, hazy sky. Below the moon, a thick waterfall of white water cascades down, surrounded by a field of shimmering, multi-colored stars. In the lower right foreground, a small, simple line drawing of a person is sitting on the ground, looking towards the waterfall. The overall color palette is cool, dominated by blues, greys, and whites, with a touch of yellow from the moon and stars.



願此書能喚醒你的道心

May this Book Awaken the Dao within your Soul

Table of Contents

【緣起 How It All Began】	i
【Historical Background / Legend】	1
【第一章】 Chapter 1.....	2
【第二章】 Chapter 2.....	4
【第三章】 Chapter 3.....	8
【第四章】 Chapter 4.....	10
【第五章】 Chapter 5.....	13
【第六章】 Chapter 6.....	15
【第七章】 Chapter 7.....	18
【第八章】 Chapter 8.....	20
【第九章】 Chapter 9.....	24
【第十章】 Chapter 10.....	25
【第十一章】 Chapter 11	35
【第十二章】 Chapter 12	37
【第十三章】 Chapter 13	39
【第十四章】 Chapter 14	40
【第十五章】 Chapter 15	46
【第十六章】 Chapter 16	48
【第十七章】 Chapter 17	54
【第十八章】 Chapter 18	58
【第十九章】 Chapter 19	59
【第二十章】 Chapter 20	62
【第二十一章】 Chapter 21.....	70
【第二十二章】 Chapter 22.....	77
【第二十三章】 Chapter 23.....	83
【第二十四章】 Chapter 24.....	98
【第二十五章】 Chapter 25.....	99
【第二十六章】 Chapter 26.....	103

【第二十七章】 Chapter 27.....	106
【第二十八章】 Chapter 28.....	109
【第二十九章】 Chapter 29.....	116
【第三十章】 Chapter 30.....	117
【第三十一章】 Chapter 31.....	119
【第三十二章】 Chapter 32.....	125
【第三十三章】 Chapter 33.....	126
【第三十四章】 Chapter 34.....	128
【第三十五章】 Chapter 35.....	129
【第三十六章】 Chapter 36.....	137
【第三十七章】 Chapter 37.....	139
【第三十八章】 Chapter 38.....	141
【第三十九章】 Chapter 39.....	152
【第四十章】 Chapter 40.....	159
【第四十一章】 Chapter 41.....	160
【第四十二章】 Chapter 42.....	175
【第四十三章】 Chapter 43.....	184
【第四十四章】 Chapter 44.....	185
【第四十五章】 Chapter 45.....	188
【第四十六章】 Chapter 46.....	190
【第四十七章】 Chapter 47.....	191
【第四十八章】 Chapter 48.....	196
【第四十九章】 Chapter 49.....	199
【第五十章】 Chapter 50.....	201
【第五十一章】 Chapter 51.....	212
【第五十二章】 Chapter 52.....	214
【第五十三章】 Chapter 53.....	224
【第五十四章】 Chapter 54.....	226
【第五十五章】 Chapter 55.....	233
【第五十六章】 Chapter 56.....	241

【第五十七章】 Chapter 57.....	243
【第五十八章】 Chapter 58.....	245
【第五十九章】 Chapter 59.....	248
【 第六十章 】 Chapter 60.....	254
【第六十一章】 Chapter 61.....	258
【第六十二章】 Chapter 62.....	260
【第六十三章】 Chapter 63.....	263
【第六十四章】 Chapter 64.....	265
【第六十五章】 Chapter 65.....	272
【第六十六章】 Chapter 66.....	274
【第六十七章】 Chapter 67.....	276
【第六十八章】 Chapter 68.....	278
【第六十九章】 Chapter 69.....	281
【 Dao De Jing Side Note 】	284
【 第七十章 】 Chapter 70.....	288
【第七十一章】 Chapter 71.....	290
【第七十二章】 Chapter 72.....	291
【第七十三章】 Chapter 73.....	292
【第七十四章】 Chapter 74.....	294
【第七十五章】 Chapter 75.....	296
【第七十六章】 Chapter 76.....	298
【第七十七章】 Chapter 77.....	300
【第七十八章】 Chapter 78.....	302
【第七十九章】 Chapter 79.....	304
【 第八十章 】 Chapter 80.....	306
【第八十一章】 Chapter 81.....	308
【 Supplement and Ending Notes 】	309
【 Hundred-Character Monument 】	313
【 About Compassion 】	317

緣起 How It All Began

In 2018, before my multi-year personal retreat, as I was conducting my final global teaching tour, several diligent students who had studied Daoist Neigong with me asked how they could continue to progress during my absence. I shared this concern with my master, Gordon, and inquired whether he could teach a group of dedicated students some more advanced Daoist practices. He graciously agreed. Consequently, in 2019, we organized two retreats—one lasting a week and the other three weeks.

To facilitate communication, we created a WhatsApp group for the retreat students. I never anticipated that, even after the retreats ended, Master Gordon would voluntarily continue teaching the group through this platform. He not only taught Daoist concepts but also summarized the core spiritual teachings of certain Buddhist sutras related to our practices, including the *Tibetan Book of Death*. His summaries unveiled esoteric teachings that cannot be found in either the English or Chinese versions of these texts. Alongside this, he shared lessons ranging from the basic principles of the Five Elements and Eight Trigrams to deeper classics found within the *Daoist Canon*. His explanations, even of the simplest concepts, differed significantly from what is commonly taught, reflecting the authenticity of the traditional Daoist lineage. Remarkably, he translated some *Daoist Canon* texts and their embedded practices and wisdom into accessible English—despite these texts never having been translated into any other language before.

At the end of 2023, I made a [YouTube video](#) titled, *The Untold History of Daoism: From its Origin to Lao Zi to the 5 Secret Gates to Daoist Religion*, where I introduced lesser-known aspects of Daoist history, tracing its development from pre-Laozi times to the present day. In it, I mentioned how a single Chinese character can have multiple meanings, leading to an exponentially greater number of interpretations for any given sentence. This complexity means that the *Dao De Jing* (as well as many other Daoist texts and Buddhist sutras) conceals numerous practical cultivation methods, which are often incomprehensible even to Chinese scholars unless they have attained a certain Qi or spiritual level through personal practice.

One student from the group after watching that video then asked Master Gordon if he could teach the *Dao De Jing*. Master Gordon, after meditative consultation with the lineage, agreed. Each week, he meditated to determine how much content was appropriate to reveal to the students at their current level. Over the course of about six months, he translated two or three chapters per week, leading to the creation of this unique version of the *Dao De Jing*.

A few months after the *Dao De Jing* teachings were completed, I casually asked Master Gordon if we could remove some of our lineage's practices from the text and make it publicly available. To my surprise, he said there was no need to remove anything; by sharing it with the group, it was already considered public. (On a side note, sometimes when I ask my master questions on WhatsApp, he insists on discussing them in person, and even then, he sets up protective boundaries before answering or teaching me.) Those practicing [Tai Chi Neigong](#), [Qigong Mode Level 3](#), and especially [Daoist Neigong Foundation](#), will find that the cultivation aspects of the book resonate deeply with their experiences.

Throughout my more than two decades of teaching, students have often asked me to recommend a specific version of the *Dao De Jing*. Unfortunately, I rarely read English translations myself, as I found most to be heavily philosophical, focusing on just one aspect of the *Dao De Jing's* teachings. This made it difficult to recommend any particular version. Now, I'm excited to finally have an English version I can confidently recommend to everyone. *Dao De Jing: Unfiltered Thoughts in Motion* offers a style that feels like a conversation between a master and students, presented in a naturally evolving format.

Sifu Wing Cheung
Tai Chi, Qigong & Feng Shui Institute Founder
taichi18.com

Historical Background / Legend

Within a certain tradition of Daoism, there is a belief that Old Lord Taishang Laojun (太上老君), in the primordial void of emptiness, initially proclaimed the DDJ using cloud-seal script. Unfortunately, the majority of sentient beings were unable to comprehend it. Hence, he descended to our mortal realm and rewrote the DDJ in its physical forms. Before departing to the Western Regions, the original text was quite lengthy. After writing it, he showed it to his followers, asking if they understood. He deleted the comprehensible portions, while the rest was retained. (maybe using MS Word to do the editing, I don't think he needs to pay an annual fee to use 360 😊). After multiple revisions, this process resulted in the current popular version.

A cloud-seal script is an energy form, which appears as the smoky script in the skies...similar to the energy as said in the trigram (it is the energy, not the physical symbol). Please refer to the notes years ago.

In recent years, various archaeological discoveries from ancient tombs have revealed different versions of the Dao De Jing (DDJ). Some sentences have extra words or variations in certain characters, leading to distinct or divergent meanings. Moreover, in ancient China, writing was done on bamboo slips or with ink on surfaces, later bound together with a string, forming a sort of large scroll.

Legend has it that during the transportation of the DDJ's over 5000 characters back to the central lands, mishaps occurred. The bamboo slips scattered chaotically on the ground, as the laborers responsible for the transport were generally illiterate. Scholars took over and invested significant effort in piecing the bamboo slips back together, resulting in the present popular and coherent version over and after 2000 years.

The unearthed versions from ancient tombs require a similar process of integration, referencing the currently popular version and aligning the internal sequence. However, within the same sentence, there are occasional differences in individual characters or additional segments. The DDJ is a synthesis of the Dao and De sections, and in one tomb discovery, the De section was found to precede the Dao section, and so forth.

A similar fate befell the Śūraṅgama Sūtra (大佛頂首楞嚴經) during its transportation from India to China, resulting in the loss of a substantial portion. Through multiple efforts, the current volumes have been preserved.

【第一章】 Chapter 1

Most Common Translation

道可道，非常道。	The Dao that can be told is NOT the eternal (original) Dao.
名可名，非常名。	The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
無名天地之始；	The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth.
有名萬物之母。	The being named is the mother of myriad things.
故常無欲，以觀其妙；	Thus, constantly without desire, one observes its essence.
常有欲，以觀其徼。	Constantly with desire, one observes its manifestations.
此兩者，同出而異名，	These two emerge together but differ in name,
同謂之玄。	The unity is said to be the mystery.
玄之又玄，衆妙之門。	Mystery of mysteries, the door to all wonders.

My Literal translation

If the Dao can be described in ordinary language, it is not the true Dao. If anything can be named in ordinary language, it is not the true name. (Referring to a significant passage from the Diamond Sutra: 'The Tathagata says all XX are non-XX, that is called XX.' In other words, conventional designations are merely convenient linguistic tools, temporarily assigned to facilitate understanding for sentient beings.)

Take a simplified example: When I say 'apple,' this name cannot truly and completely describe the apple. The apple itself possesses numerous other beautiful qualities, both external and internal. Describing it as an 'apple' is just a convenient way for us to understand that it is not a pear. In childhood, teachers might say 'red' and 'round,' and the standard answer often becomes 'apple.' This is not entirely appropriate and is an imperfect logic ingrained through education.

The original substance, unnamed and imperceptible, is the origin of all things. What can be named, which we can perceive, gradually becomes the multitude of

things in the world that we understand and apply. This process is established, organized, and built upon based on our desires, needs, and so on.

Therefore, if we can eliminate desires, prejudices, obstacles of inherent knowledge (karma), and preconceived perceptions (sense and organs), and observe everything as it truly is, we can directly perceive the subtle wonders and truths within the realms.

Conversely, if we habitually use the wisdom of our world to observe everything in this world, we can explore the edges of things. Existence and non-existence, named and nameless – these two may seem different and bear different names, mutually exclusive, but their origin is the same, from the Dao. Referring to the Yijing, the metaphysical is called Dao, and the physical is called vessels.

Understanding that these seemingly incompatible concepts originate from the same source (Dao), and although they appear different, they are mutually exclusive, one can peek into the gate of myriad wonders within the profound mysteries, the mysteries within mysteries.

We will return to discuss other aspects of ‘name’ as the later chapters unfold.

【第二章】 Chapter 2

Most Common Translation

天下皆知美之為美，斯惡已。	When the world knows beauty as beauty, ugliness arises.
皆知善之為善，斯不善已。	When it knows good as good, evil arises.
故有無相生，	Being and non-being mutually give rise to one another.
難易相成，	Difficult and easy bring about each other,
長短相較，	Long and short reveal each other,
高下相傾，	High and low leaning and supporting each other,
音聲相和，	Sound and voice harmonize with each other, (note 1)
前後相隨。	Front and back follow each other.
是以聖人處無為之事，	Therefore, the sages embrace the principle of wu wei in handling affairs. (note 2)
行不言之教；	Convey the wisdom through silent guidance.
萬物作焉而不辭，	Engage with countless elements but refrain from exerting control.
生而不有。	Create but do not possess.
為而不恃，	Act but do not presume,
功成而弗居。	Succeed but do not dwell on.
夫唯弗居，	Indeed, since and only if they do not dwell on,
是以不去。	Loss is of no consequence.

My Literal translation

This is the first chapter, extending towards the concept of (名). (名) is not merely a designation for things or sentient beings; it also names the principles and concepts used in the world, thereby exerting a valuable influence. The original text states that the world recognizes beauty and strives to achieve it, which is a commonly accepted concept. It refers to the idea that certain names or behavioral norms are established through shared recognition or common habits.

We are given a defined concept, such as what is considered beautiful in the text. Anything that does not conform to these criteria is deemed not beautiful and may even be considered undesirable. The same applies to good and bad. In addition to conceptual definitions, there are relative aspects, such as long and short, high and low, and so on. These are generally binary oppositions. When we say something is good, there must be a standard for what is not good in our minds. Unconsciously, this gradually develops into an inherent awareness of loving beauty and disliking filth.

Surprisingly, the worldly definition of beauty is not necessarily universally accepted. Your idea of beauty may differ drastically from mine, changing with geography and evolving over time. Contradictions lead to disputes.

This does not align with the Dao. As described in the first chapter, the Dao is not a binary opposition; it is harmonious. We know that the Dao manifests in the world as a vessel or tool (refer to [Chapter 1](#)). It follows people like a shadow, with a constant interplay of yin and yang, forming shadows in unity. Furthermore, the interdependence of yin and yang does not imply incompatibility; often, they support each other, as seen in the example of long and short in the original text. Therefore, the sage cannot be fixed in one perspective, not choosing between likes and dislikes, only doing what aligns with the Dao. When success is achieved, they do not cling to power or fame, and thus, they do not lose the way. (Note: The "not losing" or "lost" in the Dao De Jing does not exclusively refer to worldly power, positions, and fame but rather not losing the way of Dao.)

As we conclude, I am reminded of a poem by the poetic immortal Li Bai (a Daoist swordsman): "The deeds are done, I brush my robe and leave, deeply hidden both in person and name." Let's conclude with this line from his poem.

Note 1: The term "音聲" (yīn shēng) in the context of the passage from the Dao De Jing refers to sound and voice. Here's a breakdown of the two components:

a. 音 (yīn): Sound

This character refers to sound in a broad sense, including any audible vibrations or noises, in raw form

It encompasses the idea of acoustic elements and vibrations that can be perceived by the ear.

b. 聲 (shēng): Voice

This character specifically refers to the human voice or vocal sound.

It is the sound produced by vocal cords and resonating in the human throat.

In the context of the passage, it represents the more intentional and expressive aspect of sound, particularly the harmonization of voices.

PS: please remember this, because it contributes an integral part of the later chapter.

Note 2: "無為" (wú wéi) is a concept from Daoism (Taoism) and is often translated as "non-action" or "effortless action." It is a key principle in the philosophy of Daoism, particularly as presented in the Dao De Jing, attributed to Laozi.

Here's a deeper exploration of the concept:

1. Non-action or Inaction: wú wéi "無為" emphasizes the idea of acting in harmony with the natural order, without unnecessary or forced effort. It does not imply complete inactivity but suggests that actions should be spontaneous, by the flow of the Dao (the Way).
2. Effortless Action: Actions taken in accordance with wú wéi "無為" are considered to be without struggle or unnecessary exertion. It's about allowing things to unfold naturally, rather than imposing one's will forcefully.
3. Alignment with the Dao: wú wéi "無為" encourages individuals to align their actions with the Dao, the fundamental principle that underlies and unites the universe. By doing so, one is in tune with the inherent order of things.
4. Letting Go of Ego: It involves letting go of personal desires and ego-driven motives, allowing the natural course of events to unfold without interference. It's about transcending the self and surrendering to the wisdom of the Dao.
5. Spontaneity and Intuition: Actions arising from wú wéi "無為" are spontaneous and intuitive, emerging from a deep understanding of the present moment and a profound connection with the natural flow of life.

The concept of wú wéi "無為" is central to Daoist philosophy, emphasizing a way of living that is attuned to the rhythms of nature, avoiding unnecessary striving, and allowing things to develop organically. It doesn't advocate complete passivity but rather a kind of aligned and purposeful action that arises naturally from a deep understanding of the Dao.

The above said is the most common textbook explanatory, a deeper concept of wú wéi "無為, is: 無為乃是有為極至，如種花。 Inaction (wú wéi) is the ultimate form of action (yǒu wéi), just like planting flowers.