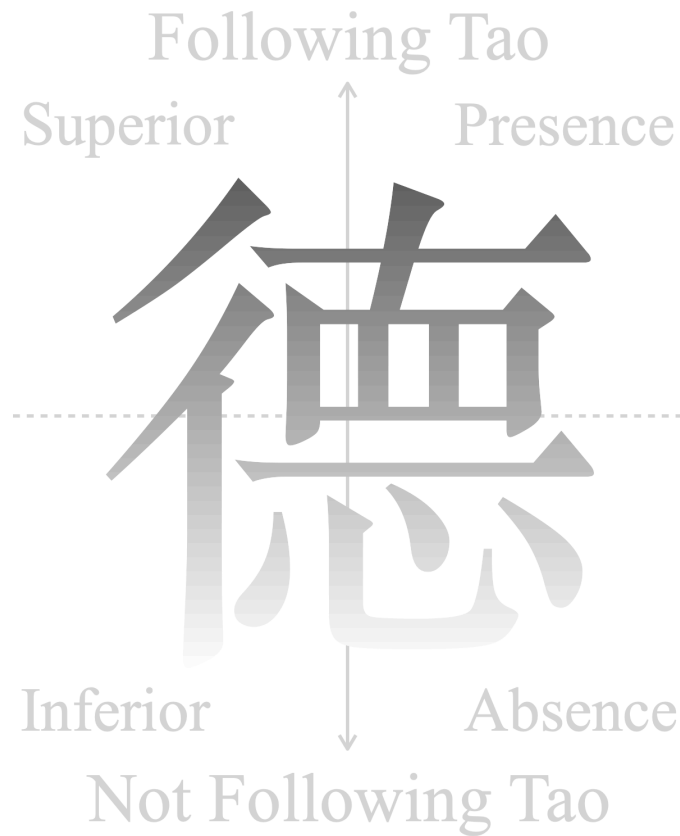


The Paradigm of Tao-Based Approaches Exemplified in the Tao Te Ching

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上德不德 是以有德 下德不失德 是以無德



My translation of the Tao Te Ching differs fundamentally from others.

~15% of the English translation of Tao Te Ching is AI-generated.

Tao Te Ching Version Quoted: Mawangdui Silk Texts

Dilemmas of the Dualism Plane Paradigm

甚愛必大費 多藏必厚亡

Excessive love inevitably leads to great expense; Hoarding much inevitably leads to heavy loss.

罪莫大於可欲 禍莫大於不知足 咎莫憯於欲得

There is no greater transgression than fostering the proliferation of desires; There is no greater disaster than not knowing contentment; There is no greater fault than the desire for gain.

爲者敗之 執者失之

He who acts, spoils it; He who holds, loses it.

持而盈之 不若汔已

To hold and fill to the brim is not as good as stopping in time.

金玉盈室 莫之守也

When gold and jade fill the vault, no way exists to guard them securely.

貴富而驕 自遺咎也

To be rich and honoured and yet become arrogant, is to bring disaster upon oneself.

Every case the Tao Te Ching raises here can be represented in the dualism plane of gain and loss. Hence the name for this pattern: the Dualism Plane Paradigm.

The word “plane” is used here intentionally to emphasize and remind readers it’s a 2D space. When perceiving the universe through a 2D lens, everything in all the possible dimensions is mapped onto this 2D space, which inevitably involves significant information loss, distortion, or even complete absence.

However, the 2D lens comes most intuitively and naturally to our species, which causes over-use of it, leading to a systemic issue for human society. When the environment becomes more complex, full of unknowns, and demanding, the consequences of not reacting and responding to the environment accordingly caused by this issue are magnified.

A dualism plane requires its participants to be in the positions that are not against its balance distribution, which changes over time, making sensing and following the next distribution a critical ability for the them. In the Chinese context, yin-yang is an example of a dualism model that can provide guidance for its users to follow balance distributions.

Hence, there are dilemmas in the Dualism Plane Paradigm such as:

- Desire for gains v. Fear for losses
- Action to gain v. Over-action to lose
- Current position not to lose v. Future position not to lose
- Time A to change position v. Time B to change position

- Correct decision this time v. Correct decision next time
- Satisfied outcome this time v. Satisfied outcome next time

Given the inherent potential for error at every turn, adopting the Dualism Plane Paradigm never guarantees immunity from loss. It's so fundamental that the Dualism Plane Paradigm itself has no solution to circumvent this risk.

Desired Effects

無不爲

Nothing remains unaccomplishable.

無有入於無間

That which has no substance can enter where there is no space (crevice).

善者善之 不善者亦善之

The one who is good at, will be good at; The one who is not good at, will also be good at.

信者信之 不信者亦信之

The one who believes, will believe; The one who does not believe, will also come to believe.

以元無死地焉

Because there is no fatal spot for one.

沒身不殆

All one's life, free from peril.

Tao at Work

夫唯道 善始且善成

The Tao is the only one that is good at both initiating and completing.

天網恢恢 疏而不失

The rules in our universe are like such a vast net that everything is encompassed. With all the spaces not occupied by any rules, nevertheless nothing escapes.

夫天道無親 恆與善人

The rules in our universe favour no one but invariably those who are good at it.

功遂身芮 天之道也

Transforming self into dimensions of being with finer granularity after achievements is how our universe works.

It is highly recommended to have an idea about what the Tao is according to my decoding in order to understand the content that follows.

For introductory materials regarding the Tao, which is the rule space, reference can be made to my two prior writings: A Mathematical Representation of Tao and Decoding Tao Te Ching: A Model & Examples.

The Paradigm: the Way Based on the Tao

Step 1: Staying away from the dualism plane one is intrigued to enter.

圖難乎汙易也 爲大乎汙細也 天下之難作於易 天下之大作於細

Approach the difficult starting where it is easy; Approach the massive starting where it is nearly intangible. The difficult undertakings in the universe are worked on starting where it is easy; The massive undertakings in the universe are worked on starting where it is nearly intangible.

人之道 爲而弗爭

The Tao for humans is to act but not to contend.

善爲士者不武 善戰者不怒 善勝敵者弗與 善用人者爲之下

One who is good at being a warrior (“Shi”, like a Knight or Samurai) does not use military force. One who is good at battling does not get angry. One who is good at defeating the enemy does not engage. One who is good at managing people positions oneself below them.

萬物 作而弗始也 爲而弗恃也 成功而弗居也 夫唯弗居 是以弗去

For anything, one should work on it but not initiate the work; act for the goal but not rely on the acting; achieve but not stay with the achievement. Only without staying, there comes the non-removable.

是以聖人芮汙身而身先 外汙身而身存

Therefore, the wise one transforms self into dimensions of being with finer granularity to become the first few; dimensions of being with coarser granularity to survive (in both cases, due to the different dimensions, visibility is significantly reduced. “芮” and “外” serve as the expressions.)

The human system, in many cases, can be treated as an ordered sequence with each individual as a member of it. Among these cases, many favour the first few individuals.

生之 畜之 生而弗有 長而弗宰也

Producing. Nourishing. Producing but not possessing. Rearing but not dictating and ruling.

吾所以有大患者 爲吾有身也 及吾無身 有何患

The reason I could have great trouble is because I have my body. Without my body, what trouble can I have?

Viewed through the lens of the “dilemmas of the Dualism Plane Paradigm,” the purpose of the teachings of the Tao Te Ching in this section becomes clear:

guiding readers beyond the Dualism Plane Paradigm to eliminate the existence of such dilemmas in the first place.

By not entering a dualism plane, one does not face the dilemmas and loss. Yet, gains can still be realized through approaches external to that plane.

Step 2: Following the Tao to find a way.

無爲

Non-action.

聞道者日損 損之又損 以至於無爲

Those who perceive Tao find themselves willing to use and apply less rules each day (with the accumulation of shelved rules increasing day by day). The number of rules that one is willing to use and apply keeps decreasing (with the accumulation of shelved rules increasing day by day). One keeps approaching continuously till reaching the state of doing nothing in the end.

既得子母 以知子母 復守子母

Having located his mother, and thereby knowing the son, one returns again to stay with his mother.

孔德之容 唯道是從 (1)

When peering through a tiny hole of very limited perception, what becomes apparent about Te's appearance is that it solely follows the Tao.

同於德者 道亦德之 (2)

The ones aligning with Te are empowered by the Tao through Te.

上善如水 水善利萬物而有靜 居眾之所惡 故幾於道矣

When it comes to being good at anything, the superior is good at being like water. Water is good at benefiting all things but is still capable of being motionless, non-disturbing and immersing. It resides in places people disdain, therefore water is almost identical to the Tao.

The Tao is the rule space. Following the Tao to gain means that one acts (non-action is not impossible though) according to a non-empty subset of the rules in the rule space that are available to them.

The Paradigm of Tao-Based Approaches: Step 1 + Step 2.

It's simple and straightforward. As stated in the Tao Te Ching:

吾言甚易知也 甚易行也 而人莫之能知也 而莫之能行也

My words are very simple to understand, and quite easy to apply, yet no one is capable of grasping them, let alone putting them into practice.

Embracing the Paradigm of Tao-Based Approaches will free human minds from being contained in the Dualism Plane Paradigm, which opens doors to truly sustainable gains and starts the journey to become a wise species, a necessity for any intelligent species to last.

The Name of the Paradigm in the Tao Te Ching

This paradigm is named after Te (德), the second character in the title “Tao Te Ching”.

In the context of the Tao Te Ching, Te holds two meanings:

- The term used for approaches in general.
- A state achieved when an approach fits the Tao-based paradigm, which follows Tao.

Te (德) can also carry both meanings at the same time. In this case, Te refers to an approach or approaches that fit Tao-based paradigm. (1) and (2) in the preceding section are two examples of this case.

Applying these definitions to the Tao Te Ching’s text:

上德不德 是以有德 下德不失德 是以無德

A superior approach is not an approach anymore, thus the state of Te, the Tao-based paradigm, exists; an inferior approach does not lose its grip on being an approach, thus the state of Te, the Tao-based paradigm, does not exist.

Te (德):

- As a term:
 - Superior approach (上德) v. Inferior approach (下德)
 - Not an approach (不德)
 - Losing the grip on being an approach (失德)
- As a state:
 - The state of Te, the Tao-based paradigm, exists. (有德) v. The state of Te, the Tao-based paradigm, does not exist. (無德)

Summary

Perhaps no words summarize the Paradigm of Tao-Based Approaches better than the following phrase from the Tao Te Ching itself:

是謂不爭之德

This is called non-contending Te.

修之身 亅德乃真 修之家 亅德有餘 修之鄉 亅德乃長 修之邦 亅德乃豐 修之天下 亅德乃博

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