



From Jane's Weibo article column: It is simple to be healthy and happy

## 浅谈《史记.论六家要旨》对现代生活的启发 (完结篇)

山水闲人 Jane\_ 2021-10-28

Talking about the Inspiration of "Historical Records. On the Essentials of Six Schools" to Modern Life (Final Chapter)

### 无为而无不为的道家

#### Chapter 7 School of Taoism

#### Taoists who act effortlessly but achieve everything

论六家要旨以阴阳家开头，以道家作为结束，正应了“大道殊途而同归”，中国文化归根溯源的道理，也表达了太史公推崇中国传统文化道统的精神。司马迁说的道家并不是现代人理解的狭义的道教，而是指“黄老”，是黄帝到老子这一段历史时期的文化系统，这个系统的核心统称为“道”。《道德经》：“道可道，非常道”。“道”是广义的道，是容纳百川，包括物质和精神，超越形而上和形而下的。诸子百家都是中国上古传统文化中道家的分脉。

The discussion of the essential points of the six schools of thought begins with the Yin-Yang school and ends with the Taoist school, perfectly reflecting the idea that "all roads lead to the same destination," which signifies the essence of Chinese culture's origin and development. This also expresses Sima Qian's admiration for the spiritual essence of the Taoist tradition within Chinese traditional culture. What Sima Qian referred to as Taoism is not the narrow concept of Taoism as understood by modern people, but rather "Huang-Lao," which pertains to the cultural system from the Yellow Emperor to Laozi. The core of this system is collectively referred to as the "Tao 道 (or Dao) ." The "Tao" in the "Tao Te Jing" states: "The Tao that can be spoken of is not the eternal Tao." This "Tao" is a broad concept that encompasses everything, including both material and spiritual elements, transcending both the metaphysical and the physical. The various schools of thought during ancient China are all branches of this broader Taoist tradition.

## WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

我们上古的祖先观察自然而开始总结基本科学，有了自然科学的观察，就总结出了理论科学和应用科学：八卦，五行，天干地支，二十八星宿，历法，24节气，日月行度，指南车，数学，医药等等。道家的经书本来就非常难懂，我们还是需要用“以经解经”的方法去理解太史公的论述，至少要先熟读《周易》和《道德经》的原文，才能理解正统的道家思想。太史公总结道家是中国文化的根源，其实也给我们留了一个方向和点睛之笔。让我们明白，道家的精髓本来就是最高的智慧，很难掌握，但是又是自然而然的。

Our ancient ancestors observed nature and began to summarize fundamental sciences. With observations of natural phenomena, they developed theoretical and applied sciences: the Bagua (Eight Trigrams), the Five Elements, the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches, the Twenty-Eight Constellation, rules of calendars, the 24 Solar Terms, the movements of the sun and moon, the compass, mathematics, medicine, and so on. Taoist texts are inherently difficult to understand, and we need to use the method of 'interpreting the classics through the classics' to grasp Sima Qian's discussions. At the very least, one must first thoroughly read the original texts of the Zhouyi (I Ching) and the Tao Te Jing to understand the orthodox Taoist thought. Sima Qian's summary of Taoism as the root of Chinese culture actually provides us with a direction and a key insight. It helps us understand that the essence of Taoism is the highest wisdom—difficult to grasp but naturally occurring.

我们读太史公对于道家的精彩评论如下：

Here's the translation of Sima Qian's insightful commentary on Taoism:

**道家使人精神专一，动合无形，瞻足万物。其为术也，因阴阳之大顺，采儒墨之善，撮名法之要，与时迁移，应物变化，立俗施事，无所不宜，指约而易操，事少而功多。儒者则不然。以为人主天下之仪表也，主倡而臣和，主先而臣随。如此则主劳而臣逸。至于大道之要，去健羨，绌聪明，释此而任术。夫神大用则竭，形大劳则敝。形神骚动，欲与天地长久，非所闻也。**

**"Taoism enables people to focus, act and change without trace, and sustain all things. Its practice aligns with the great order of Yin and Yang, draws on the strengths of Confucianism and Mohism, integrates essential principles of legalism and logicism, adapts to the times, responds to changes in the world, and is suitable for various customs and situations. It is straightforward and easy to practice,**

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

requiring few actions yet yielding significant results. Confucianism, on the other hand, operates differently. It views the ruler as the model for the world, where the ruler leads and the subjects follow; this results in the ruler's labor and the subjects' ease. As for the essence of the Tao, it involves moving away from force and cleverness, abandoning these in favor of techniques. If the spirit is used too much, it will be exhausted; if the body is used too much, it will become weak. I have never heard of a person with an imbalanced mind and body who can live as long as heaven and earth."

#### “道家使人精神专一”

##### “Taoism enables people to focus”

老子说：“圣人之治，虚其心，实其腹”，这是正统的道家修行的方法。道家从“无欲虚心”入门，做到“清心寡欲”，乃至“离情弃欲”，心无杂念而纯净澄清，自然能够精神专一。

Laozi said: “The Saint’s governance free the mind and satisfy the body.” This reflects the orthodox Taoist method of cultivation. Taoism begins with the practice of “having no desires and an unoccupied mind,” progressing to “a serene and desireless heart,” and ultimately reaching “abandoning emotions and desires.” When the mind is free from distracting thoughts and is pure and clear, it naturally leads to focused and unified spiritual energy.

#### “动合无形”

##### “act and change without trace”

“道”是“变动不居，周流六虚”，“道”只是一个代名词，可以包括形而上和形而下的一切，这个不可见，不可得的“道”，只能在名相上讲一些概念和比喻，在用上去体会，因而让人摸不着门道，所以是“动合无形”，只有修道得道的人才会懂。

The “Tao” is characterized by “constant change and circulation through the six voids(universe).” The “Tao” is merely a placeholder that can encompass everything, both metaphysical and physical. This invisible and unattainable “Tao” can only be discussed in terms of concepts and metaphors, and experienced through practice. Therefore, it is described as “act and change without trace,” and only those enlightened practitioners can understand Tao.

#### “瞻足万物。”

##### “Sustaining all things.”

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

“道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物”。宇宙万物都来源于“道”。这个“道”的自然法则养育了天地间的万物。

**“The Tao generate One; One generate Two; Two generate Three; Three generate all things.”** All things in the universe originate from the Tao. This natural law of the Tao nurtures all things between heaven and earth.

**“其为术也，因阴阳之大顺，采儒墨之善，撮名法之要，”**

**“Its practice aligns with the great order of Yin and Yang, draws on the strengths of Confucianism and Mohism, and integrates the essentials of the School of Names and the Legalists.”**

道家之术，这里指精通传统道学的人，本事很大，懂得采用各家的长处和精华。道家的人懂得阴阳家的顺应自然的规律，采用儒家和墨家的长处，运用名家和法家的精要。

In this context, Taoist practices/techniques refer to those practiced by adept Taoists who are well-versed in traditional Taoist teachings. They effectively incorporate the strengths and essence of various schools of thought. Taoists understand the natural principles of the Yin-Yang school, utilize the advantages of Confucianism and Mohism, and apply the key principles of the School of Names and the Legalists.

**“与时迁移，应物变化，立俗施事，无所不宜，指约而易操，事少而功多。”**

**“Adapt to changing times and respond to the transformation of things, establish customs and implement practices that are universally appropriate, with methods that are simple and easy to apply, achieving much with minimal effort.”**

这是做人做事很难的一点，就是古人常说的“顺应天时地利人和”，《易经》包括五种学问：“理，象，数，通，变”。“理象数”是基本学问，代表事情的理论知识，现象分析和数理分析。这一部分要精通就已经很难。然后再到全部精通，才可能做到第四步“通”，就是融会贯通，各种知识学问都能够应用自如。最后才是“变”，要懂得变就是最难的。只有精通道家的人才懂得变。一般的人都是跟随潮流的变化随波逐流，道家的人在变以前就知道了。道家的人能够顺应天时地利人和，做人做事都“无所不宜”，恰到好处，做事的方法简单明了而且容易操作，“事少而功多”，就是我们常说的“四两拨千斤”，像打太极拳一样，好像非常容易，并没有用很多的力气，但是却得到很高的成效。这就是道家的智慧，道家的人有非常精妙的筹划和安排，只是平常人看不出来门道而已。

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

This is a challenging aspect of conduct and action, often referred to in ancient times as “following the favorable timing and conditions.” The I Ching encompasses five areas of study: “Principles, Images, Numbers, Application, and Change.” “Principles, Images, and Numbers” represent the foundational knowledge, including theoretical understanding, phenomenological analysis, and mathematical analysis. Mastery of these is already quite difficult. Achieving the fourth step, “Application,” means integrating and applying all knowledge skillfully. The final step, “Change,” involves understanding and managing transformation, which is the most challenging. Only those who are well-versed in Taoism truly grasp the concept of change. While ordinary people follow the trends and go with the flow, Taoists anticipate changes before they occur. Taoists can adapt to timing, conditions, and harmony with people, ensuring that their actions are always appropriate. Their methods are simple and clear, yet highly effective—like using “four ounces of strength to move a thousand pounds,” akin to Tai Chi, which appears effortless but yields substantial results. This is the essence of Taoist wisdom: Taoists have intricate plans and arrangements that are not easily discernible to the average person.

“儒者则不然。以为人主天下之仪表也，主倡而臣和，主先而臣随。如此则主劳而臣逸。”

**“Confucianism, on the other hand, operates differently. It views the ruler as the model for the world, where the ruler leads and the subjects follow. The ruler advocates, and the subjects harmonize; the ruler sets the example, and the subjects comply. In such a situation, the ruler becomes increasingly burdened while the subjects become complacent.”**

汉武帝时期重用儒生，采取“罢黜百家，独尊儒术，君权神授”，整个社会风气也是这样。所以，太史公指出了当时儒家的弊病：“人主”就是君主或者领导人的意思，儒家学者推崇“君权神授”，把领导人的言行推崇为天下人的表率 and 榜样，领导人提倡什么，下面的人就附和什么，领导人先提出来意见和措施，下面的人跟随着指令去做。这样的情况，领导人越来越辛劳，下面的人却可以亡逸，就是失职而逃避责任。“逸”，失也，即亡逸。

During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han dynasty, Confucian scholars were heavily favored, and the policy was to “discard the hundred schools and honor only Confucianism, asserting the divine right of kings.” This influenced the entire societal atmosphere. Therefore, Sima Qian pointed out the shortcomings of Confucianism at the time: The term “ruler” refers to the monarch or leader. Confucian scholars revered the notion of “divine right of kings,” elevating the leader’s words and actions as the model

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

for all people. The leader advocates certain policies or measures, and the subordinates merely follow and agree. As a result, the leader becomes increasingly burdened with responsibilities, while the subordinates become negligent and shirk their duties. The term “逸” (yi) means to neglect or escape responsibility.

《周易·序卦传》：“有天地然后有万物，有万物然后有男女，有男女然后有夫妇，有夫妇然后有父子，有父子然后有君臣，有君臣然后有上下，有上下然后礼义有所错。”  
From the "The order of Hexagrams" of the I Ching:

"First there was Heaven and Earth, and then came all things. With all things came men and women. With men and women came husband and wife. With husband and wife came father and son. With father and son came ruler and subject. With ruler and subject came higher and lower. With higher and lower came the proper conduct of ritual and righteousness."

君臣就是社会关系，包括所有社会关系里的上下级的关系。这样我们就容易理解太史公的意思了，是说当时儒家这样的主张，扩展到社会关系和做人做事的时候，也会把自己搞得越来越累，往往事倍而功半，花了很大的力气，却得不到应该的效果。The term "ruler and subject" refers to social relationships, including hierarchical relationships in all social contexts. With this understanding, we can better grasp Sima Qian's point. He is suggesting that the Confucian principles of that time, when extended to social relationships and conduct, often led to increasing burdens on leaders. Despite significant effort, the results were often disproportionately small—much effort with little return. This illustrates how Confucian ideals, when applied to governance and societal roles, could result in leaders becoming more overburdened while achieving less effective outcomes.

**“至于大道之要，去健美，绝聪明，释此而任术。”**

道家的人就不一样了，懂得“大道”的精要之处，去掉贪欲，不故意玩弄手段和聪明，因为能够释怀而放下一切，清心寡欲，所以能够在做人做事上任运自如。这一段要借用老子的话来理解了，老子说：“绝圣弃智，民利百倍。绝仁弃义，民复孝慈。绝巧弃利，盗贼无有。此三者以为文不足，故今有所属。见素抱朴，少私寡欲。”春秋时期，老子已经看到社会变乱，很多人以仁义道德为口号，却做的欺世盗名，伤天害理的事情，所以老子强调要废除那些假仁假义，要老实规矩地做人真是真修道。

**“As for the essence of the Great Tao, it involves eliminating desires, refraining from cunning and cleverness, and letting go of everything to rely on the Taoist method.”**



### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

Taoists are different. They understand the essence of the “Great Tao” by removing greed, avoiding the use of manipulative strategies and cleverness, and letting go of attachments. By maintaining a serene and desireless mind, they are able to navigate conduct and affairs with ease. To understand this, we can refer to Laozi’s words: “Do not promote sages and smart ones, and the people will benefit a hundredfold. Do not praise benevolence and righteousness, and the people will return to filial piety and compassion. Do not compete with skill and profit, and thieves and robbers will disappear. These three are not sufficient as written doctrine, so today they are applied in practice. Embrace simplicity and hold to the unadorned, reduce selfishness and desires.”

During the Spring and Autumn period, Laozi observed societal disorder and the misuse of moral ideals as mere slogans for deceitful and harmful actions. Thus, Laozi emphasized rejecting false benevolence and righteousness, and advocated for sincere and proper conduct as the true path to cultivating the Tao.

**“夫神大用则竭，形大劳则敝。形神骚动，欲与天地长久，非所闻也。”**

**“When the spirit is overused, it becomes exhausted; when the body is overworked, it deteriorates. If both body and spirit are constantly overburdened and restless, seeking to endure with the heavens and the earth, this is something unheard of.”**

精神使用过度就会衰竭，身体劳累过度就会衰败，倘若身体和精神不断劳累纷扰，不得安宁，却想要与天地共长久，则是从未听说过的事。

This passage suggests that excessive strain on both the mind and body leads to deterioration, and it is unrealistic to expect to maintain a harmonious existence with the natural world while being in such a state of constant strain and unrest.

**道家无为，又曰无不为。其实易行，其辞难知。其术以虚为本，以因循为用，无成势，无常形，故能究万物之情；不为物先，不为物后，故能为万物主；有法无法，因时为业；有度无度，因物兴舍。故曰“圣人不朽，时变是守”。虚者，道之常也；因者，君之纲也；群臣并至，使各自明也。其实中其声者谓之端，实不中其声者谓之黷。黷言不听，奸乃不生，贤不肖自分，白黑乃形。在所欲用耳，何事不成！乃合大道，混混冥冥，光耀天下，复反无名。凡人所生者神也，所托者形也。神大用则竭，形大劳则敝，形神离则死。死者不可复生，离者不可复合，故圣人重之。由是观之，神者，生之本也，形者，生之具也；不先定其神形，而曰我有以治天下，何由哉！**

**“Taoism advocates ‘wu wei’ (non-action or effortless action) yet is also described as ‘nothing is left undone.’ In practice, it is easy to follow but difficult to articulate. Its principles are based on the concept of emptiness and the method of following**

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

natural processes. There are no fixed forms or established methods, which allows one to understand the nature of all things. Not being ahead of things, nor following after things, hence being the master of all things. Having principles while being without fixed rules, adapting to circumstances; having standards yet being without fixed limits, adapting to things and letting go. Hence it is said, 'The Saint is eternal; they guard the rule of change. Emptiness is the constant of the Tao. Cause, is the principle of the ruler. When all officials come together, each will have clarity. Those who are straightforward in their speech are called 'straight,' while those who are not are called 'deceptive.' Deceptive speech is not heard, thus deceit does not arise. The virtuous and the unworthy naturally distinguish themselves, and the true nature of things—black and white—becomes apparent. When positive desired to be applied, nothing is unattainable! Thus, they align with the Great Tao, which is vast and obscure, shining brightly upon the world, and then returning to namelessness. What is born in a person is the spirit, and what is entrusted is the body. When the spirit is overused, it becomes exhausted; when the body is overworked, it deteriorates. When the spirit and body are separated, death occurs. The dead cannot be revived, and separation cannot be reunited, so sages value this understanding. From this, it is clear that the spirit is the essence of life, and the body is its vessel. Without first establishing harmony between the spirit and the body, how can one claim to have the means to govern the world?"

我们还是尝试继续用《道德经》的原文来理解这一段的内容。

Let's try to understand this passage using the original text from the **Tao Te Jing**.

**“道家无为，又曰无不为。其实易行，其辞难知。其术以虚为本，以因循为用，无成势，无常形，故能究万物之情；”**

**“Taoism advocates 'wu wei' (non-action or effortless action) yet is also described as 'nothing is left undone.' In practice, it is easy to follow but difficult to articulate. Its principles are based on the concept of emptiness and the method of following natural processes. There are no fixed forms or established methods, which allows one to understand the nature of all things.”**

道家讲“无为而无不为”，《道德经》：“圣人处无为之事，行不言之教。”得道的圣人效法天地的法则，为而无为的原则，做人做事，如行云流水，理所当然，该做的事就要义不容辞，做完也不留丝毫痕迹。看起来好像很容易就做完了事情，但是很难用言辞解释其中的奥妙。道家的理论以“虚无”为根本，以“因循”为用，“无成势”，没有一个现成固定的做事的姿态和方法可以让人模仿，“无常形”，没有固定的形状，做事是无形



### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

无相的，让人摸不着头绪。因为有这样高明的智慧和修养，所以道家的圣人可以明白和精通万物的情状和道理。

Taoism teaches “wu wei and “wu bu wei” (non-action yet nothing is left undone). In the *Tao Te Jing*, Laozi says, “The Saint acts in accordance with non-action and teaches without words.” A saint who has attained the Tao emulates the principles of heaven and earth, adhering to the principle of doing without doing. Their actions flow effortlessly, like clouds and water, performing necessary tasks naturally and leaving no trace. It may seem that tasks are accomplished effortlessly, but the underlying subtleties are hard to explain in words. Taoist theory is grounded in the concept of “emptiness” and the practice of “following natural processes,” with no fixed patterns or established methods to imitate, and no permanent forms. This formless approach, which defies straightforward understanding, allows Daoist sages to grasp and master the nature and principles of all things.

**“不为物先，不为物后，故能为万物主；”**

**“Not being ahead of things, nor following after things, hence being the master of all things.”**

这几句话包含了老子在道德经里的两层意思，即道的体和用，以及得道的圣人懂得做事的修养和方法。

《道德经》：“其上不徼，其下不昧，绳绳兮不可名，复归于无物。是谓无状之状，无物之象，是谓惚恍。迎之不见其首，随之不见其后。”“道”不受形而上或者形而下的污染，是物质又不是物质，超越时空，无开始无结束，要迎接它也找不到从哪里开始，要追随它也无痕迹可寻。

These lines encapsulate two key aspects of Laozi's teachings in the *Tao Te Jing*: the essence and function of the Tao, and the cultivation and methods understood by a saint who has attained the Tao.

In the *Tao Te Jing*, Laozi says: “It does not strive for supremacy above, nor does it remain obscure below; it is the patternless pattern and the formless form, which is called the nebulous. To meet it is to not see its head; to follow it is to not see its rear.” The Tao is not tainted by either the metaphysical or the physical. It is both material and immaterial, transcending time and space, with no beginning or end. One cannot discern where to begin in embracing it, nor trace its path in following it.

《道德经》：“道冲而用之或不盈。”道“是冲合谦虚永远没有满盈而无止境。

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

*Tao Te Jing*: “The Tao is empty but inexhaustible.” The Tao is characterized by boundless humility and continuous potential.

因此，道家的圣人有虚怀若谷，冲合谦虚的修养，一切都符合“道”，所以“不为物先”，永远不会争强好胜，“不为物后”，有无穷的智慧，生生不已，应用自如，所以同能生万物的宗主一样。

Thus, Taoist saints embody the virtues of humility and boundless openness, aligning with the Tao in all things. They do not strive to be ahead of others, showing no competitive ambition, nor do they lag behind, possessing endless wisdom and the ability to apply it effortlessly. This allows them to act as the source and master of all things, just as the Tao generates and sustains all creation.

**“有法无法，因时为业；有度无度，因物兴舍。故曰“圣人不朽，时变是守。”**  
**“Having principles while being without fixed rules, adapting to circumstances;**  
**having standards yet being without fixed limits, adapting to things and letting go.**  
**Hence it is said, ‘The Saint is eternal; they guard the rule of change.’”**

《道德经》：“有之以为利，无之以为用。”要明白道在有无之间的奥妙。从内在的修养，到处事的哲学，也就是“内圣外王”的道理，有了出世之道，内在的修养，才会懂得怎样做入世的事业，怎样掌握分寸。《道德经》：“天长地久，天地所以能长且久者，以其不自生，故能长生。是以圣人后其身而身先，外其身而身存。”所以得道的圣人可以“不朽”，可以天长地久，始终遵守因时而变的大道。

In the *Tao Te Jing*: “Having is seen as beneficial, while not having is seen as useful.” This highlights the subtleties of the Tao between presence and absence. From inner cultivation to external philosophy, it embodies the principle of “inner saint and outer king,” where having the way of transcending the world (the path of cultivation) enables one to understand how to handle worldly affairs and maintain the right balance. Laozi explains: “Heaven and earth endure because they do not live for themselves; thus, they can live forever. Therefore, the Saint places themselves after and yet is ahead, puts themselves outside and yet remains.” Thus, a saint who attains the Tao can be “eternal,” aligning with the eternal and ever-changing Tao.

**“虚者，道之常也；”**  
**“Emptiness is the constant of the Tao.”**

“虚”是修“道”的“常”，老子在《道德经》里说：“致虚极，守静笃；万物并作，吾以观复。夫物芸芸，各复归其根。归根曰静，静曰复命。复命曰常，知常曰明。不知常，

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

妄作凶。知常容，容乃公，公乃全，全乃天，天乃道，道乃久，没身不殆。“用佛法的名词来解释“常”，就是不生不灭，不垢不净，不增不减。

“Emptiness” is fundamental to cultivating the Tao. Laozi states: “Achieve utmost emptiness, maintain steadfast tranquility; observe the myriad things and see their return. All things flourish and then return to their roots. Returning to the root is tranquility; tranquility is the way to return to life. Returning to life is the constant; knowing the constant is wisdom. Not knowing the constant leads to misfortune. Knowing the constant allows for acceptance, acceptance leads to impartiality, impartiality leads to completeness, completeness leads to the Tao, and the Tao is eternal, with no end or danger to life.”

In terms of Buddhist terminology, “constant” can be understood as being neither born nor perished, neither defiled nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing.

**“因者，君之纲也；”**

**“Cause, is the principle of the ruler.”**

“因”就是第一因，宇宙万物的真理，“君”是“君子”的意思，就是圣人做人处事的纲纪。“Cause” refers to the fundamental principle or the first cause, the truth of the universe. “Ruler” in this context means the principle or guidelines followed by a gentleman(a person of virtue), representing the standards and rules by which a saint conducts themselves and handles affairs.

**“群臣并至，使各自明也。”**

**“When all officials come together, each will have clarity.”**

“群臣”不是指大臣，是遇到的任何人和事情，得道的圣人都能够恰如其分地安排明了。

In this context, “officials” does not refer specifically to ministers but to anyone and anything encountered. A saint who has attained the Tao is able to handle and arrange each situation appropriately and with clarity.

**“其实中其声者谓之端，实不中其声者谓之谵。谵言不听，奸乃不生，贤不肖自分，白黑乃形。”**

**“Those who are straightforward in their speech are called ‘straight,’ while those who are not are called ‘deceptive.’ Deceptive speech is not heard, thus deceit does**

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

**not arise. The virtuous and the unworthy naturally distinguish themselves, and the true nature of things—black and white—becomes apparent.”**

就是我们平时说的“言不由衷”的意思，“端，直也”，正直的意思；“窳，匿也”，藏匿的意思，指老鼠藏在洞里，也就是虚假的意思。如果大家都不去听，也不相信那些虚假而美丽的谎言，就不会有欺世盗名的骗子，“肖”是模仿的意思，“贤不肖自分”，真假自然能够分辨，事实黑白也自然显示出来，真相大白于天下。

This conveys the idea of being genuine versus deceptive. “**Straight**” (端) means upright and honest, while “**deceptive**” (窳) implies concealment or falsehood, like a rat hiding in a hole. If people do not listen to or believe false and deceitful words, there will be no room for deceivers. When deceit is absent, the distinctions between the virtuous and the unworthy become clear, and the true nature of things—whether good or bad—becomes evident, revealing the truth to all.

**“在所欲用耳，何事不成！”**

**“When desired to be applied, nothing is unattainable!”**

这一句的意思，我们可以引用孟子的话来理解。《孟子·尽心篇》：“可欲之谓善，有诸己之谓信，充实之谓美，充实而有光辉之谓大。大而化之之谓圣，圣而不可知之之谓神。“是讲每一步做人做事的学问和修养，从”可欲“开始，就是全身心地投入，才叫做善。如果学问修养没有达到可欲的境界，没有变成一种欲望和习惯，就没有达到”至善“的标准，也不能继续进步升华到光辉和圣人。《说文解字》：“用，可施行也。”得道的圣人随时随地都能达到至善的标准，做任何事情都符合道德，所以可以随心所欲地做事情，什么事情都能够做成！

To understand this, we can refer to Mencius’s words in the *Mencius* (Chapter “Jin Xin”): “What is desirable is called good, what is within oneself is called trust, what is complete is called beautiful, and what is complete and radiant is called great. To be great and transform is called sage, and to be sage and unknowable is called divine.” This illustrates the progression of personal cultivation and conduct: beginning with what is desirable, which requires wholehearted investment to be truly good. If one’s learning and cultivation do not reach the level of positive desire and habit, it falls short of achieving “ultimate goodness” and cannot progress to brilliance and sainthood. According to the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* (A Dictionary of Chinese Characters): “To use means to be applicable.” A saint who has attained the Tao can achieve the highest standards of

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

goodness at any time and place. Therefore, they can act freely and effortlessly, and everything they undertake is accomplished in accordance with the Tao.

**“乃合大道，混混冥冥，光耀天下，复反无名。”**

**“Thus, they align with the Great Tao, which is vast and obscure, shining brightly upon the world, and then returning to namelessness.”**

因此，得道的圣人做人做事合乎大道的法则，大道的法则是什么呢？是“混混冥冥”，就是广博精深，“混，盛满之流也。孟子曰。源泉混混。”“冥，窈也。”虚空渺茫，精妙深奥的意思。“光耀天下，复反无名”，实现了功业，像日月一样光辉照耀天下，然后就销声匿迹，“功成身退”。

A saint who has attained the Tao aligns their actions and conduct with the principles of the Great Tao. What are these principles? The Tao is described as “vast and obscure,” meaning it is profound and all-encompassing. “Vast” (混) refers to something full and overflowing, as Mencius described: “The source is vast and abundant.” “Obscure” (冥) means deep and mysterious, representing the boundless and subtle nature of the Tao.

The phrase “shining brightly upon the world, and then returning to namelessness” signifies achieving great deeds and illuminating the world like the sun and moon, yet eventually withdrawing from the limelight and fading into obscurity, embodying the principle of “accomplishing the task and retiring.” This reflects the ideal of making a significant impact and then gracefully stepping back, remaining nameless and unobtrusive.

**“凡人所生者神也，所托者形也。神大用则竭，形大劳则敝，形神离则死。死者不可复生，离者不可复合，故圣人重之。由是观之，神者，生之本也，形者，生之具也；不先定其神形，而曰我有以治天下，何由哉！”**

**“What is born in a person is the spirit, and what is entrusted is the body. When the spirit is overused, it becomes exhausted; when the body is overworked, it deteriorates. When the spirit and body are separated, death occurs. The dead cannot be revived, and separation cannot be reunited, so sages value this understanding. From this, it is clear that the spirit is the essence of life, and the body is its vessel. Without first establishing harmony between the spirit and the body, how can one claim to have the means to govern the world?”**

这里太史公讲的是道家关于生命的理论，人的生命要活着就有精神，还要依托一个身体。老子在《道德经》中说：“载营魄抱一，能无离乎？”人的身体如一部车子，装着

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

“营”和“魄”这两个东西，也就是我们常说的身心，即身体和精神。如果精神耗用过度就会衰竭，身体耗用过度就会损坏。生活的奔波忙碌，思想的纷杂混乱，不断消耗，不能够做到精神和身体“合抱为一”，持盈保泰，就会走向死亡。死去的人不能复生，身体和精神一旦分离了就不能再复合，所以圣人懂得身心结合的重要性。从这个道理说明了，精神是生命的根本，身体是生命的依托。不懂得调养安定自己的精神和身体，却自夸可以有办法治理天下，怎么可能呢！

Here, Sima Qian discusses Daoist theories regarding life. For a person to be alive, they need both a spirit and a body. Laozi in the *Dao De Jing* says: “Can one maintain unity when the body and spirit are separated?” The body is likened to a vehicle carrying the spirit and soul, which we commonly refer to as the body and mind. If the spirit is excessively used, it will become exhausted; if the body is overworked, it will deteriorate. The demands of daily life and the chaos of thoughts continuously deplete both, leading to an inability to maintain a unified state of mind and body, which can result in death. The dead cannot be revived, and once the spirit and body have separated, they cannot be reunited. Therefore, sages understand the importance of the harmony between mind and body. This principle shows that the spirit is the essence of life and the body is its support. Without first establishing and maintaining the balance of one's own spirit and body, how could one possibly claim to have the capability to govern the world effectively?

清代主编四库全书的大儒纪晓岚为道家学术的评语：“综罗百代，博大精微”。按照我们古书中的记载，我们的文化应该至少是 200 万年以上，从三皇（天皇氏，地皇氏，人皇氏）开始，然后到伏羲，神农，和五帝（黄帝到唐尧虞舜）。孔子重视考据，所以从尧典开始整理记录历史，司马迁就把尧典以前从黄帝开始的历史都补齐了。《史记·五帝本纪》里有五帝的资料：“自黄帝至舜、禹，皆同姓而异其国号，以章明德。故黄帝为有熊，帝颛顼为高阳，帝喾为高辛，帝尧为陶唐，帝舜为有虞。”唐尧虞舜之后，就是夏商周三代，然后到春秋战国。道家上古的文献，我们现在还可以看到河图和洛书，易有三易：《连山易》，《归藏易》和《周易》。因为《连山易》和《归藏易》的原本已经找不到了，分散到民间的各类书籍里面。因此流传到现在的原本是《周易》，也就是我们平常说的《易经》。“易更三圣”，我们现在读的《周易》，是包含了周文王，周公和孔子的注解。《易经》是中国文化的根，宇宙和人世间的道理都跳不出易经的法则。



### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

The Qing Dynasty scholar Ji Xiaolan, who was the chief editor of the Siku Quanshu, praised Taoist scholarship with the comment: “Comprehensive and profound, encompassing all dynasties.” According to ancient records, our culture dates back at least 2 millions years, beginning with the Three Sovereigns (the Celestial Sovereign, the Terrestrial Sovereign, and the Human Sovereign), followed by Fuxi, Shennong, and the Five Emperors (from the Yellow Emperor to Tang Yao and Yu Shun). Confucius valued textual research, so he began organizing historical records from the Yao era. Sima Qian completed the historical records from the Yellow Emperor onward in the *Records of the Grand Historian*. The *Records of the Grand Historian* provides information on the Five Emperors: “From the Yellow Emperor to Shun and Yu, they all had the same surname but different titles to clarify their virtues. Thus, the Yellow Emperor was called Youxiong, Emperor Zhuanxu was Gaoyang, Emperor Ku was Gaoxin, Emperor Yao was Taotang, and Emperor Shun was Youyu.” After Tang Yao and Yu Shun came the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, followed by the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods.

Taoist ancient texts that we can still see today include the He Tu and Luo Shu. There are three versions of the Yi (the book of Change): the *Lian Shan Yi*, the *Gui Cang Yi*, and the *Zhou Yi*. Since the originals of the *Lian Shan Yi* and *Gui Cang Yi* are no longer available and have scattered into various folk texts, the version that has been passed down to us is the *Zhou Yi*, commonly known as the *I Ching*. The *I Ching* has been enriched by the annotations of King Wen of Zhou, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius. It represents the root of Chinese culture, and the principles of the universe and human affairs are fundamentally grounded in the laws of the *I Ching*.

后世的道教尊老子为道教的教主。后人习惯说老庄，就是老子和庄子。我们需要了解一下传承。老子西出函谷关，碰上了尹喜，尹喜请老子传道，所以留下一本 5 千字的《道德经》，后来尹喜传道给壶子，壶子传给列子，列子留下了一本《列子》，就是《冲虚经》，列子传道给庄子，庄子留下一本《庄子》，就是《南华经》。从上古文献到现代《中华道藏》，收集了道家经典 1500 多种书籍，5500 多卷，约 6000 余万字，很少有人能够全部阅读完。如果不能全部读完，也希望以后的年轻人能够遵循“大道”的原则，返本溯源，从原始经典开始阅读，才可能有一丝一毫的理解和感悟。

In later generations, Laozi is revered as the founder of Taoism. People commonly refer to Laozi and Zhuangzi together as ‘Lao-Zhuang.’ It is important to understand the transmission of Taoist teachings. Laozi traveled westward beyond the Hangu Pass and met Yin Xi, who requested Laozi to impart his teachings. Thus, Laozi left behind the *Tao Te Ching* (about 5,000 words). Yin Xi later passed the teachings to Huzi, who then passed them to Liezi. Liezi authored the *Liezi*, also known as the *Chongxu Jing* (Classic

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

of the Void). Liezi transmitted the teachings to Zhuangzi, who wrote the *Zhuangzi*, also known as the *Nan Hua Jing* (Book of Southern Flowers).

From ancient texts to the modern *Zhōnghuá Dào Zàng* (Taoist Canon of China), which collects over 1,500 Taoist classics in more than 5,500 volumes and approximately 60 million characters, very few people can read all of these works completely. Even if one cannot read them all, it is hoped that future generations will adhere to the principles of the 'Great Tao,' return to the origins, and start their study with the original classics. Only then might they gain some understanding and insight.

不论是老子还是孔子，都是重视道德的价值。道是德之体，德是道的用。只是远古时期的民风淳朴，自然有道德，就不需要强调道德。大道的精神是自然而然，本来如此，不需要人为的雕琢。老子说“人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然”。道不需要再效法什么东西，自然而然，本来如此。在《列子》里有一段黄帝梦游华胥国的故事，一个人间天堂的理想国度，就是人类追求幸福圆满的象征。太史公对传统道学的推崇，同样表达了对美好和谐社会的憧憬和向往。

Whether Laozi or Confucius, both emphasized the value of Tao. Morality is the essence of Tao, and virtue is the application of the Tao. In ancient times, when the people were naturally virtuous and simple, there was no need to emphasize morality. The spirit of Tao is inherent and natural; it does not require artificial embellishment. Laozi said, 'Man follows the Earth, the Earth follows Heaven, Heaven follows the Tao, and the Tao follows itself.' The Tao does not need to imitate anything else; it is naturally so, as it is.

In the *Liezi*, there is a story about the Yellow Emperor's dream journey to the Kingdom of Huaxu, an ideal realm on Earth, symbolizing humanity's pursuit of happiness and fulfillment. Sima Qian's admiration for traditional Taoist thought also reflects his yearning for a beautiful and harmonious society."

司马迁在自序里面有两句话：“藏之名山，传之其人。”《史记》写完以后，司马迁知道，身在当时的历史环境，当时的人并不见得看得懂，所以司马迁说把这本书藏在山洞里，留给后人读，百年千年以后，总会有聪明人懂的。佛说：“一切圣贤皆以无为法而有差别”。孔子在《易经·系辞》里说：“一阴一阳之谓道。继之者善也，成之者性也。仁者见之谓之仁，知者见之谓之知。百姓日用而不知，故君子之道鲜矣。”每一个人对于“道”的理解都不一样，每个人每天都在用，但是却不懂得这个“道”。

In his preface, Sima Qian wrote two sentences: 'Hide it in the mountains and pass it on to those who will understand.' After completing the *Records of the Grand Historian*, Sima Qian realized that people of his time might not fully comprehend it. He thus

### WEST MEETS EAST – ANCIENT MEETS MODERN

suggested hiding the book in a cave, leaving it for future generations. In a hundred or a thousand years, there would surely be wise people who would understand it.

The Buddha said, 'Saints differ only metaphysically.' Confucius, in the *Commentary on the Yi Jing*, said, 'The Tao is what is meant by the interaction of yin and yang. To continue Tao with goodness, to achieve Tao with our true nature. The benevolent see it as benevolence, and the wise see it as wisdom. The common people use it daily without knowing it; hence, the way of the gentleman is rare.' Each person's understanding of the Tao is different, and everyone uses it daily without truly knowing it.

以前有一个朋友说中国文化博大精深，没有办法用一句话做一个总结。其实我们的祖先已经留给我们一句总结的话，这一句话是尧传给舜，舜又传给大禹，就是中华十六字心传：“**人心惟危，道心惟微，惟精惟一，允执厥中。**”中华文化的精髓和高明之处正是可以收放自如，可多可少，可大可小，可以博大也可以精微，可以归纳总结，也可以无限发挥，万变不离其中！

A friend once said that Chinese culture is so vast and profound that it cannot be summarized in a single sentence. However, our ancestors have already left us a concise summary. This phrase was passed down from Yao to Shun, and from Shun to Yu the Great. It is the sixteen-character heart transmission of Chinese culture: **'The human heart is precarious; the Tao heart is subtle. Be precise, be unified, and centered.'** The essence and brilliance of Chinese culture lie in its flexibility and adaptability. It can be expanded or contracted, made large or small, and it can be both vast and intricate. It can be summarized concisely or elaborated infinitely, yet it always remains true to its core principles!