

## Questions to think about while reading *Laozi* (老子):

1. The multiple meanings of the term "Way" (*dao* 道): see below.
2. What is *de* 德 (virtue, power) and how is it related to *dao*?
3. The "natural" (*ziran* 自然) and "artificial" (*wei* 偽).
4. Individual life and human values in relation to the Way; Laozi as a critic of civilization, of humanism.
5. *Wu-wei* 無為 (non-action, non-striving, effortless) as a guide to life; as a way of government.
6. Laozi as social reformer.
7. The Confucian philosopher Xunzi's criticism of Laozi: that he "has insight into what is crooked (bent) but not what is straight."

## Two Clusters of Meaning of *Dao* 道 in *Laozi*:

### A. *Dao* as the way of nature, or the principle underlying all things:

1. Ineffable, beyond verbal and conceptual expression
2. Mysterious, obscure, never clearly or sharply perceived
3. Origin, Mother, principle of fertility
4. Inherently dynamic, changing
5. Constant, *unchanging*
6. Simple, unadorned, uncontrived (uncarved block)
7. Empty, vacuous, pure potential, inexhaustible
8. Indifferent to human values, purposeless

### B. *Dao* as a way of life:

1. Nourishing and valuing life
2. Achieving longevity (long life), immortality
3. Stillness, quiescence
4. Yielding, non-contention, "feminine" virtues, water
5. Non-action (*wu-wei* 無為)
6. Spontaneity (*ziran* 自然)
7. Creativity
8. Statecraft

## TOPICS IN LAOZI 老子

- Against honor, wealth, etc.: 3, 13, 75  
Against knowledge, learning: 3, 10, 18, 19, 81  
Against Confucian values: 5, 12, 18, 19, 38, 48, 67  
Baby: 10, 20, 28, 55  
Being (*you* 有) and non-being (*wu* 無): 2, 11, 14, 28 (*wuji* 無極), 40  
Body over mind: 3, 10, 13  
Breath (*qi* 氣), concentration, meditation?: 3, 10, 49, 52, 56  
Change: 1, 16, 25, 34, 40  
Compassion (*ci* 慈): 18 (against – but possible textual error for 孫), 19, 67 (for)  
Constant: 1, 16, 52, 55  
*Dao*: 1, (2), 4, 9, 14, 16, 18, 21, 24, 25, 30 (go against), 32, 34, (35), 37, 39 (One), 40-42, 51, 53, (54), 55, 59, 62, 67  
*De* (德): 10, 28, 38, 41, 51, 54, 55, 59, 65  
Deceptive appearances: 41, 45, 68  
Desire: 1, 3, 13, 15, 19, 34, 37, 46, 57, 64  
Discernment, clarity (*ming* 明): 10, 16, 33, 36, 52, 55  
Emptiness (*xu* 虛): 4, 5, 11, 16, 22  
Excess, contentment: 24, 29, 32, 33 (知足), 44, 46, (53), 80  
Feminine, yielding, water, valley, weak, receptive, etc.: 6, 8, 15, 20, 28, 36, 43 (& rock, & 78), 61, 76  
Ghosts and spirits: 60  
Government: 3, 10, 13, 14, 17, 48 (*wu-shi* 無事), 57-60, 62, 74, 78, 80  
Ineffability: 1, 14, 15, 21, 32, 35, 41, 43, 56 (cf. 71)  
Long-life: 7, 16(?), 33, 44, 50  
Lowliness: 8, 32, 39, 61, 66, 67, 70, 72, 76, (77)  
Military strategy: (36), 57, 67-69, 76  
No traces, non-arrogance, naturally effective: 22, 24, 27, 29, 30, 34  
Non-contention (*buzheng* 不爭), retiring: 8, 9, 22, 31, 66, 68 (martial arts), 73 (天道), 81  
Non-discrimination: 12, 20  
Origin, cosmogony: 1, 2, 4, 6, 16, 25, 40, 42, 52, 59  
Relativity of opposites, paradox, effectiveness, etc.: 2, 3, 20, 22, 26, 36, 39, 41, 44, 45, 58, 63, 71 (cf. 56), 75-77, 78  
Responsiveness: 64  
Return: 14, 16, 25, 28 (*wuji* 無極), 40  
Sage as model: 22, 27  
Sage: 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, (15), 20, 22, 27-29, 47, 49 (no constant mind, *wu chang xin* 無常心), 57, 58, 60, 63, 64, 70-72, 77-79, 81  
Selflessness, impartiality: 7, 16, 19, 49 (*wu chang xin* 無常心), 79 (天道), 81  
Simplicity (*su* 素), uncarved block (*pu* 樸): 15, 28, 32, 37  
Spirits: 60  
Spontaneity, natural: 17, (23), 25, 51, 64  
Stillness: 16, 26, 47, 57, 61  
Transformation (化): 37 (self-), 56  
*Wu-wei* (無為): 2, 3, 10 (and *wu-zhi* 無知), (17), (22), 29 (world as vessel), (32), (34), 37, 38, 43, 47, 48, 57, 63, 64  
*Yin-yang* (陰陽): 42