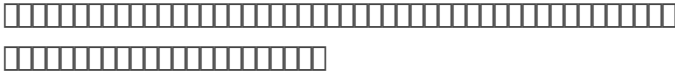


Chapter 29



Alternate editions read: 道 for 道 .

Translation

Whoever would seize all under Heaven and impose upon it —
I foresee he shall not succeed.
All under Heaven is a sacred vessel:
it cannot be imposed upon.
Whoever imposes upon it shall ruin it;
whoever clings to it shall lose it.
Among all beings, some lead and some follow;
some breathe warm and some breathe cool;
some are strong and some are frail;
some rise up and some fall away.
Therefore the Sage sets aside the excessive,
sets aside the extravagant,
sets aside the extreme.

Word Notes

- 道 — "**breathe warm**": To blow softly and warmly; gentle exhalation that warms.
- 道 — "**blow cool**": To blow sharply, producing cold.
- 道 — "**frail, weak**": Debilitated, emaciated.
- 道 — "**to fall away**": To crumble, to topple.
- 道 — "**extravagant**": Wasteful luxury.
- 道 — "**extreme, excessive**": Going beyond what is fitting; overdoing.

Chapter Explanation

Whoever desires to **seize all under Heaven** and rule it by his own autocratic authority — **I foresee that he shall not succeed**. For all under Heaven is **a most honored and weighty implement** — a sacred vessel. **It cannot be ruled by one person's autocratic authority**. Whoever tries to rule by autocratic authority will be defeated. Whoever clings to power will lose it. For **among the myriad beings, some go ahead and some follow behind; some breathe warm and some breathe cool; some are strong and some are weak; some can bear up**

and some fall away — none of this is fixed or uniform. How can one person's autocratic rule possibly work? Therefore **the Sage does not force things** but follows the natural course of all beings. He merely **sets aside what is excessive, sets aside what is extravagant, and sets aside what is extreme.**

Discourse

The supreme authority over all under Heaven is the most honored and precious vessel belonging to all the people. How can it be privately possessed by a single person? To snatch even a trifling possession from one person — that person will not willingly yield it. To snatch the precious vessel of all the people under Heaven — how can the people accept it? Therefore Laozi restrains human greed, saying that the sacred vessel of all under Heaven cannot be privately possessed by one person. Whoever seizes it by force will certainly be defeated. For the sacred vessel exists to preserve order and peace, to ensure the welfare of the people. If it is appropriated for one person's private use, harm inevitably spreads among the multitude, bringing disaster to all. Even without selfish or self-serving motives, one person's wisdom and deliberation are limited, while the affairs and principles under Heaven are inexhaustible. The geography of all under Heaven differs — some regions are warm, some cool, some rich, some lean. Human temperaments differ — some strong, some frail, some clever, some simple. Customs differ — some civilized, some undeveloped. How can one person's autocratic rule possibly work? Therefore the Sage who holds all under Heaven as a public trust selects the worthy and elevates the capable, instructing them to use this vessel to govern. He himself need not toil personally. He merely ensures that they do not overexert their strength, leaving room to maneuver, keeping things easy to turn about — so that strength is not exhausted and things do not break down.

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