

Everything is Nothing

**Introductory Podcast to
Daoism**

Booklet to the podcast



Tao te ching

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Not to Honor the Worthy
Puts an end to Contending
Among the folk.

Not to Prize Rare Goods
Puts an end to Theft
Among the folk.

Not to Display Objects of Desire
Removes Chaos
From the Heart-and-Mind
Of the folk.

The Taoist rules by
Emptying Heart-and-Mind
And Filling Belly,
By softening the Will to Achieve,
And strengthening Bones.
The Taoist frees the fold
From False Knowledge and Desire.
Those with False Knowledge
No longer dare to Act.
The Taoist Accomplishes
Through Non-Action,
And all is well Ruled.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 11-12)

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Heaven and Earth last,
They Endure.
They do not give Birth
To other Heavens,
To other Earths.
They Endure.
The Taoist puts Self Aft,
And Self is Fore,
Treats Self as a thing outside,
And Self Endures,
Treats Self as a thing Not-Personal,
And Person is Fulfilled.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 25)

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The Best is like Water.
Water Benefits the Myriad Things.
Water does not Contend.
It abides in that
Which the Multitude abhor.
It is close to the Tao.
The Best Dwelling
Depends on Terrain,
Best Heart-and-Mind
Depends on Depth.
Friendship on Kindness,
Words on Good Faith,
Government on Order,
Practical Matters on Competence,

3

Movement on Timing.
Wheresoever there is no Contending,
There is no Fault.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 28)

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Thirty Spokes joined in a hub
Form a Wheel.

The Emptiness between,
The Non-Being,
Makes the Carriage Useful.

Clay kneaded
Forms a Pot.

The Emptiness within,
The Non-Being,
Makes the Pot Useful.

Windows and doors chiseled

Create a House;

The Emptiness within,

The Non-Being,

Makes the House Useful.

Being and Substance

Bring Benefit.

Non-Being and Emptiness

Make things Useful.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 38)

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Do away with Sages,
Discard Wisdom.
The Folk will Benefit
A hundredfold.
Do away with Benevolence,
Discard Righteousness.
The folk will Return
To True Devotion
And Compassion.
Do away with Cunning,
Discard Profit,
And there will be no Thieves.
If these injunctions
Do not suffice,
Gaze upon
Simple Undyed Silk,
Embrace
The Uncarved Block,
Think less of Self,
Diminish Desire.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 64)

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The Tao
Has no Name.
The Uncarved Block
Is Small,
But subject to None
In All-under-Heaven.

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When Nobles and Kings
Cleave to it,
The Myriad Things
Willingly pay them homage.
Heaven and Earth as One
Send Sweet Dew,
The folk dwell
In Harmony
With no need of Decree.
Once the Uncarved Block
Is split apart,
Once there are Names,
Then know where to Halt,
Keep safe from Harm.
The Tao is
To All-under-Heaven
As the Great River
And the Ocean are
To Streams and Valleys.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 110-111)

43

The Softest Thing
In All-under-Heaven
Outstrips
The Hardest.
Non-Being
Enters No-Space.
I Know the Benefit
Of Non-Action,
The Wordless Teaching.

Few in All-under-Heaven
Attain it.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 156)

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Studying
Requires Daily Increase.
The Tao
Requires Daily Decrease,
Until Non-Action is Attained.
With Non-Action
Everything is Accomplished,
Everything Happens.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 173)

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All-under-Heaven
Has a Beginning,
A Mother.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 188)

56

Who Knows
Does not speak;
Who speaks
Does not Know.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 203)

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Accomplish
Through Non-Action,
Be Busy
About No-Business,
Taste
No-Taste.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 232)

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I have Three Treasures
To Hold and to Cherish.
The first is
Compassion,
The second
Frugality,
The third
Self-Effacement,
Refusal to take precedence
Over All-under-Heaven.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 250-251)

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To Know
Not-Knowing,
To Know

8

That one does not Know,
To Know
That there is a Limit
To what one Knows,
This is
True and Highest
Knowledge.

To deny True Knowledge,
To deny Truth,
Is an Illness.

If this is seen for what it is,
And treated
As an Illness,
It can be cured.

The Taoist
Sees Illness as Illness,
And is healthy.

(Lao-tzu (Laozi): Tao te ching (Daodejing): The tao and the power. Translation, introduction, and commentary by John Minford. New York: Viking 2018, p. 266)

Zhuangzi

Book 1 »Wandering Freely«

In the North a fish called Kun turns into a bird named Peng
Whose wingspan extends I know not how many li.
When Peng ascends his wings
Spread like clouds all around the sky
And when the sea begins to move
Peng travels southward to the Lake of Heaven.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak.
New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 83)

Book 2 »The Equality of All Things«

Great knowledge is wide and comprehensive; small knowledge is partial and restricted. Great speech is exact and clear; small speech is full of words.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 90)

Once I, Zhuang Zhou, dreamt that I was a butterfly fluttering about happily. I did not know that I was Zhou. Suddenly, I awoke, and there I was, Zhou again. I did not know whether it was Zhou dreaming that he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming that it was Zhou. Between Zhou and a butterfly there must be a distinction. This is called the transformation of things.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 97)

Book 3 »The Mastery of Life«

There is a limit to our life but to our knowledge there is no limit. To pursue what is unlimited with what is limited is perilous. Knowing this, if we persist in increasing our knowledge we will be in danger. Do not practice what is good for the sake of fame, nor what is evil and incur punishment. If you follow the natural way you will be able to preserve the body, to sustain your life, to care for your parents, and to complete the term of your life.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 99)

The marsh pheasant has to take ten steps for a peck of food and a hundred steps for a drink, but it does not want to be fed in a cage. Although it might live well in the cage, it would not wish to be confined.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 100)

Book 5 »The Sign of Virtue Complete«

In the state of Lu, there was a man called Wang Tai who had lost a foot. Still his disciples were as numerous as Confucius'. Chang Ji asked Confucius, "Wang Tai has lost a foot, yet he has as many disciples as you have in the state of Lu. He does not stand up to teach; he does not sit down to discuss. People go to him with an empty mind and come back with a full mind. Is there really teaching without words? Is the mind complete even when the body is imperfect? What kind of man is he?" Confucius replied, "This master is a sage. It is only that I have been slow in going to see him. I will make him my teacher; how much more then should those who are not equal to me! Why only the state of Lu? I will bring all under heaven with me to follow him."

Chang Ji said, "He is a man who has lost a foot and yet he is above you, Master. How different then he must be from ordinary men. What is the way that his mind functions?"

"Life and death are great matters, but they do not affect him," said Confucius. "Even if heaven and earth were to crash and fall, it would be no loss to him. He knows directly that which is without falsehood. While all things change, he changes not. He regards the transformation of things as following their prescribed course."

"What do you mean?" Chang Ji asked.

"When you look at things in their differences," replied Confucius, "the liver and the gall are as different as the state of Zhue and the state of Yue. But when you look at things from their similarities, all are one. This is so with Wang Tai. He takes no notice of what his ears and eyes perceive; his mind rejoices in the harmony of virtue. He regards the unity of

things and does not consider what is lost. He takes the loss of his foot as a bit of earth left behind.”

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 110)

Chapter 6 »The Great and Honored Teacher«

Dao has reality and manifestation but does nothing and has no form.

It may be imparted but cannot be grasped. It may be attained but cannot be seen. It has its root and ground of existence in itself. Before there were heaven and earth it existed from eternity. From it came the powers of the spirits and the gods. It produced heaven and earth. It was there before the highest summit and yet could not be called lofty. It was below all space and yet could not be considered low. It came before heaven and earth and yet it has not existed long. It is more ancient than the great antiquity, and yet cannot be considered old.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 118)

Chapter 6 »The Great and Honored Teacher«

Nanbo Ziqi asked Nu Yu, “You are old but your complexion is like that of a child—how is this?”

“I have attained the dao,” replied Nu Yu.

“Can I learn the dao?”

“No, how can you? You are not the man to do it. There was Bu Liangyi, who had the ability of the sage but not the dao. I have the dao but not the ability. I hoped to teach him to become a sage. It seemed as though to teach the dao of the sage to a man with his ability would be easy. I exerted considerable effort, and after three days he was able to put aside all worldly concerns. After he put aside all worldly concerns, I continued with him for seven days and he was able to put aside all material things. After he put aside all material things I continued with him for

nine days and he was able to transcend all life. Having transcended all life, he was as clear as the morning. Having become as clear as the morning, he was able to see the One.¹⁴ Having seen the One, he was able to set aside past and present. Having set aside the past and present, he was able to enter where there is neither life nor death.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 119)

Book 11 »Letting Be and Letting Stand«

The lowest were the tyrant Jie and the Robber Zhi; the highest were Zeng and Shi. At this time the literati and the Mohists also emerged. Between the genial and the hostile there was mutual suspicion; the foolish and the wise betrayed one another; the good and the bad denounced one another; the vain and the sincere slandered one another. Thus the world deteriorated. Regarding the great virtue there was no consensus. Nature and its activity were burned up and submerged. All sought after knowledge and people were enervated from their pursuit. At this time the axe and the saw came into use; verdict was determined as by the plumb-line and death inflicted. The hammer and gauge did their work. The world fell into utter disorder and resembled a broken mountain ridge. This was all due to interfering with men's minds. The men of ability and worth stayed concealed under the crags of the great mountain, while the princes of ten thousand chariots were full of fear and trembled in their palaces.

In the present age, those who have been put to death lie in a thick heap; those who are shackled in stocks press on one another; those punished with beatings see one another while waiting for their turn. And now the literati and Mohists stand on tiptoe waving their arms among the fettered and manacled multitude! Ah, what insolence and shamelessness! Strange that we should be so slow to see the wisdom of the sage in the shackles and benevolence and righteousness in the rivets of the fetters and chains! How do we know that Zeng and Shi are not the speeding

arrows signaling the onslaught of Jie and Zhi? Hence it is said, “Abolish sages and cast away knowledge and the world will be in order.”

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 141-142)

Book 13 »The Way of Heaven«

The way of heaven moves continuously and all things are brought to completion. This is the way of the emperors to whom all under the sky turn and the way of the sages who are honoured by all within the seas. Those who comprehend the way of heaven understand the way of the sages, traverse the universe guided by the work of the emperors and the rulers, and act spontaneously. Appearing to be without knowledge, they abide in stillness.

The sages are still not because they possess an aptitude for being still. Nothing can disturb their mind—that is why they are still. When the water is still, it reflects the eyebrows and the beard. It is a perfect level and the craftsman takes his rule from it. If still water has this clarity, how much greater is that of the spirit! The still mind of the sage is the mirror of heaven and earth reflecting all things.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 158)

It was the way of the emperors and rulers to regard heaven and earth as their origin, the dao and virtue as their sovereign, and non-action as their constant rule. For the one who does not act, the world stands in readiness to assist to the utmost. For the one who acts, the offer of the world would be insufficient. Hence the ancients honoured non-action.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 159)

Book 15 »Ingrained Ideas«

Hence it is said, “Calm, impartiality, silence, quietude, emptiness and non-action—these are the attributes of the equilibrium of heaven and earth and the essence of the dao and virtue.”

Therefore it is said, “The sage is completely still and his mind abides in equilibrium and calm. This equilibrium and calm are seen in his imperturbability and impartiality. No anguish and harm can affect him and dissolute influences cannot unsettle him. His virtue is complete and his spirit continues unaltered.”

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 176)

Book 16 »Cultivation of Innate Nature«

Those who attempt to cultivate their innate nature by common learning with the aim of recovering their original state and those who seek to regulate their desires by common thinking with the aim of becoming enlightened are deluded and ignorant.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 178)

Book 16 »Cultivation of Innate Nature«

Virtue deteriorated still further when Yao and Shun began to rule the world. Introducing government by rule, they destroyed purity and simplicity. The dao was forfeited and the good was promoted on the course of the random pursuit of virtue.³ Departing from their innate nature, they were swayed by the inclination of their minds. They were connected by knowledge in their minds but could not bring order to the world. Adding elegance of form to knowledge and then proliferating it engulfed simplicity until the mind was submerged. Then people became perturbed and bewildered; they could not return to their true nature and revive the original state.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak.
New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 179)

Book 22»Knowledge Wanders in the North«

Dongguozi asked Zhuangzi, “What you call the dao—where is it?”

Zhuangzi replied, “It is everywhere.”

Dongguozi said, “Be more specific.”

“It is in the ants,” replied Zhuangzi.

“Is there still a lower place?”

“It is in this grass.”

“Is there still a lower place?”

“It is in this clay tile.”

“That must be the lowest place?”

“It is in the excrement.”

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak.
New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 223)

Book 23 »Gengsang Chu«

When one persists in not responding to the gestures of friendship he forgets others; he may then be regarded as a heaven-like man.¹³ When he is shown respect he feels no joy, and when he is shown disdain he feels no anger. Only one who is in harmony with heaven can be thus. If one exhibits anger without being angry, anger is expressed in the suppression of it. If one engages in action without doing anything, that action is non-action. Seeking to be calm, one must be at peace in one’s feelings. Seeking to be spirit-like, one must act in accordance with one’s mind. When one is required to act, one recognizes that what is right is that which cannot be otherwise. To act in accordance with what is inevitable—this is the way of the sage.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak.
New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 235)

Book 29 »Robber Zhi«

“As for the admonitions, Confucius, you hope to press upon me, if you were to tell me about spirits, that is beyond my knowledge. But if you tell me about the world of men, then it is as I have stated and what I have heard and know all about.

“Now I will tell you about the state of men. Eyes wish to look on beauty, ears to hear music, the mouth to taste flavours, the will to be fulfilled. At most a man can live to be a hundred, or until eighty in the middle range or until sixty in the lowest range. Reckoning the days taken up by illness, grief, mourning, anguish and despair, there are only four or five days in a month when one may open one’s mouth and laugh.

Heaven and earth are boundless and eternal, but death is unavoidable for men. Take the longest possible interval of finite time and compare it with what is unlimited: its brief duration is like a horse swiftly passing a crevice in a wall. Those who cannot gratify their will and natural inclinations and promote their longevity are all deficient in their knowledge of the dao.

(Zhuangzi. By Chuang Tzu, Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Daniel Kolak. New York: Routledge 2007, 1st Edition, p. 283)

Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Pyrrhonism

BOOK I, Chapter 4, What Scepticism is

Scepticism is an ability, or mental attitude, which opposes appearances to judgements in any way whatsoever, with the result that, owing to the equipollence of the objects and reasons thus opposed, we are brought firstly to a state of mental suspense and next to a state of “unperturbedness” or quietude.

(Sextus Empiricus: Outlines of Pyrrhonism. Translated by The Rev. R. G. Bury, Litt. D. Edited by G. P. Goold, PH. D. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1976-2000, p. 7)

BOOK I, Chapter 4, What Scepticism is

“Suspense” is a state of mental rest owing to which we neither deny nor affirm anything.

“Quietude” is an untroubled and tranquil condition of soul.

(Sextus Empiricus: *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Translated by The Rev. R. G. Bury, Litt. D. Edited by G. P. Goold, PH. D. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1976-2000, p. 9)

BOOK I, Chapter 12, What is the End of Scepticism?

Now an “End” is “that for which all actions or reasonings are undertaken, while it exists for the sake of none”; or, otherwise, “the ultimate object of appetency.”^a We assert still that the Sceptic’s End is quietude in respect of matters of opinion and moderate feeling in respect of things unavoidable. For the Sceptic, having set out to philosophize with the object of passing judgement on the sense-impressions and ascertaining which of them are true and which false, so as to attain quietude thereby, found himself involved in contradictions of equal weight, and being unable to decide between them suspended judgement; and as he was thus in suspense there followed, as it happened, the state of quietude in respect of matters of opinion. For the man who opines that anything is by nature good or bad is for ever being disquieted: when he is without the things which he deems good he believes himself to be tormented by things naturally bad and he pursues after the things which are, as he thinks, good; which when he has obtained he keeps falling into still more perturbations because of his irrational and immoderate elation, and in his dread of a change of fortune he uses every endeavour to avoid losing the things which he deems good. On the other hand, the who determines nothing as to what is naturally good or bad neither shuns nor pursues anything eagerly; and, in consequence, he is unperturbed.

The Sceptic, in fact, had the same experience which is said to have befallen the painter Apelles.^b Once, they say, when he was painting a horse and wished to represent in the painting the horse’s foam, he was so unsuccessful that he gave up the attempt and flung at the picture the sponge on which he used to wipe the paints off his brush, and the mark of the sponge produced the effect of a horse’s foam. So, too, the Sceptics were in hopes of gaining quietude by means of a decision regarding the disparity of the objects of sense and of thought, and being unable to effect this they suspended judgement; and they found that

quietude, as if by chance, followed upon their suspense, even as a shadow follows its substance.

(Sextus Empiricus: *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Translated by The Rev. R. G. Bury, Litt. D. Edited by G. P. Goold, PH. D. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1976-2000, p. 20-21)

Sextus Empiricus: Against the Ethicists

VI. Whether there is any Skill Relating to Life

We have shown well enough that it is possible for people who adopt suspension of judgement about everything to live acceptably; but there is nothing to prevent us from also scrutinizing in a parallel way the stance of the dogmatists, even though it has been scrutinized in part already. For they promise to impart a certain skill relating to life, and for this reason Epicurus said that philosophy is an activity which procures the happy life by arguments and debates, while the Stoics say straight out that practical wisdom, which is the science of things which are good and bad and neither, is a skill relating to life, and that those who have gained this are the only ones who are beautiful, the only ones who are rich, the only ones who are sages. For the person who possesses things of great value is rich, but virtue is of great value, and the sage alone possesses this; therefore the sage alone is rich. And the person who is worthy of love is beautiful, but only the sage is worthy of love; therefore only the sage alone is beautiful. Well, such promises snare the young with vain hopes, but they are in no way true.

(Sextus Empiricus: *Against the Ethicists (Adversus Mathematicos XI)*. Translation, Commentary, and Introduction by Richard Bett. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997, p. 28)

Niccolò Machiavelli: *The Prince*

Chapter 15, Of those things for which men, and particularly princes, are praised or blamed

Now, it remains to be considered what should be the methods and principles of a prince in dealing with his subjects and allies. Because I know that many have written about this,* I am

afraid that by writing about it again I shall be considered presumptuous, especially since in discussing this material I depart from the procedures of others. But since my intention is to write something useful for anyone who understands it, it seemed more suitable for me to search after the effectual truth of the matter rather than its imagined one. Many writers have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen nor known to exist in reality. For there is such a distance between how one lives and how one ought to live, that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done achieves his downfall rather than his preservation. A man who wishes to profess goodness at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good. Therefore, it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain himself to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity.

(Niccolò Machiavelli: *The Prince*. Translated and Edited by Peter Bondanella. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 2005, p. 53.)

Chapter 19, Of avoiding being despised and hated

But since I have spoken about the most important of the qualities mentioned above, I should like to discuss the others briefly under this general rule: that the prince, as was noted above, should concentrate upon avoiding those things that make him hated and contemptible.

When he has avoided this, he will have carried out his duties, and none of his other infamous deeds will cause him any danger at all. As I have said, what makes him hated above all else is being rapacious and a usurper of the property and the women of his subjects. He must refrain from this. In most cases, so long as you do not deprive them of either their honour or their property, most men live content, and you only have to contend with the ambition of the few, who can be restrained without difficulty and by many means.

(Niccolò Machiavelli: *The Prince*. Translated and Edited by Peter Bondanella. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 2005, p. 62-63.)

Chapter 25, Of Fortune's power in human affairs and how she can be resisted

I am not unaware that many have held, and do still hold, the opinion that the affairs of this world are controlled by Fortune and by God, that men cannot control them with their

prudence, and that, on the contrary, men can have no remedy whatsoever for them. For this reason, they might judge that it is useless to lose much sweat over such matters, and let them be controlled by fate. This opinion has been held all the more in our own times because of the enormous upheavals that have been observed and are being observed every day – events beyond human conjecture. When I have thought about it, sometimes I am inclined to a certain degree towards their opinion. Nevertheless, in order not to wipe out our free will, I consider it to be true that Fortune is the arbiter of one half, or almost that, to us.* I compare her to one of those destructive rivers that, when they become enraged, flood the plains, ruin the trees and buildings, raising the earth from one spot and dropping it onto another. Everyone flees before it; everyone yields to its impetus, unable to oppose it in any way. But although rivers are like this, it does not mean that we cannot take precautions with dikes and dams when the weather is calm, so that when they rise up again either the waters will be channelled off or their force will be neither so damaging nor so out of control. The same things occur where Fortune is concerned. She shows her power where there is no well-ordered virtue* to resist her, and therefore turns her impetus towards where she knows no dikes and dams have been constructed to hold her in.

(Niccolò Machiavelli: *The Prince*. Translated and Edited by Peter Bondanella. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 2005, p. 84-85.)