


UNITED WISDOM

# Passing on an undertaking without demanding complete immutability

Meaning and Direction

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

P-18-N01 · EN

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

# Passing on an undertaking without demanding complete immutability

## Epigraph

*We are as we are, of ourselves!*

— Laozi, Tao Teh King, 17.2; translated by James Legge.

## What this article is about

Handover can sound contradictory: continue independently, but do everything exactly as I did. The request may express concern for quality, accepted promises, or people who need the undertaking. It may also express a wish to preserve one's place after decisions should belong to others. This article distinguishes those reasons. Handing over does not require disappearing without explanation or controlling successors forever. A purpose, known conditions, accurate authorship, and actual commitments can be discussed separately. Methods may change. The questions are why, with whose participation, and with what consequences for those affected. A fictional reading group will illustrate the transition, without a guarantee of success or legal instructions. Continuation needs understanding, and another person's understanding is not our property.

## I. What exactly needs preserving

When someone wants an undertaking preserved, the object needs clarification. Sometimes the result matters: people can learn, help remains accessible, or work meets a standard. Sometimes a principle matters: questions are not ridiculed, information is checked, or agreements are openly named. Sometimes only a familiar meeting time, arrangement of objects, or facilitator's tone is meant. These sides may connect without being identical. Passed on as one undivided demand, they make it difficult to identify consequential choices. Every change looks suspicious; every repetition looks faithful. Clarification does not devalue the old arrangement. It shows what each part did and whether it still does that work.

A condition also differs from a preference. A former participant may prefer evening meetings without a morning meeting destroying the purpose. A promised form of access or specific agreement raises another question: changing it affects an accepted commitment. Interested people need to participate in considering that change, rather than having it cancelled through an appeal to a new generation. The article determines no legal validity of conditions. It asks that different reasons not disappear inside “tradition.” One can be offered as useful



@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

experience, another named as an existing promise, a third explained as a value whose realization remains discussable. A requirement can then be assessed through its substance.

The giver may not immediately know why a detail matters. It could have been introduced after a mistake whose explanation stopped being voiced, attached to a personal memory others do not share, or simply become habitual. These reasons should not be guessed for someone or automatically diagnosed as a hidden desire for power. They can have room to name the reason themselves. Insufficient grounds for compulsory preservation do not forbid remembering the history. New participants can respect a form's origins without accepting it as an eternal rule. Handover begins with that distinction: substance deserves explanation and history remembrance, but not every detail automatically governs future work.

## II. A group changes its meeting format

Imagine a fictional reading group. Its founder chose books, asked the opening question, and gathered people on Thursdays for years. Now they want to step back; new facilitators suggest meeting less often, inviting different conversation partners, and rotating texts. The founder fears the group is disappearing. This is a description of concern, not yet an established outcome. What did Thursdays provide: regularity, access for working people, familiar participants, or shared time? Named reasons permit comparison of alternatives. Naming Thursday alone quickly makes the dispute a loyalty test. People defend personalities instead of examining what they actually need from reading together.

New facilitators may underestimate the former arrangement too. Less frequent meetings seem freer to them but may remove a dependable place of conversation for others. This can be investigated without declaring the old order sacred. Particular voices matter: who can attend, who faces difficulty, and what people want to try. Unanimity on every detail is unnecessary, but a convenient change should not be presented as everyone's interest. The group might retain some regular meetings, try another rhythm for a limited period, or acknowledge that the former group is ending. No option deserves preference merely because it looks old or new. Reasons belong to the participants' actual situation.

The example proves no universal handover through one conversation. Particular requirements, complex agreements, and consequences can require competent separate assessment. It does show a difference between naming a format and explaining its work. “Preserve the group” leaves successors too much ambiguity; reproducing the founder's entire character gives them an impossible task. A more definite handover names why people met, which questions remained open, and which decisions now belong to successors. The founder remains part of the history while new participants stop being mere performers of an absent voice. This makes discussion possible rather than guaranteeing a good outcome beforehand.

## III. Experience is passed on with reasons

The most useful explanation is not always the longest. Successors may need to know where mistakes occurred, which decision helped, and why it was chosen. A list of gestures without reasons teaches repetition but not necessarily understanding. In the fictional group, an open first question helped different people enter discussion. A new facilitator can then choose another question for the same task. A list of permitted and forbidden phrases may preserve outward sequence while a participant goes unheard. Experience becomes more accessible when a method is shown as a response to a particular situation. It stops looking like a law whose origins nobody may question.

In Democracy and Education VI.3, Dewey distinguishes routine action from experience that reveals connections and consequences. This offers limited philosophical support for handover: teaching a sequence differs from making its reasons visible. His argument concerns education, not a study of a particular organization; no explanation is guaranteed to create understanding. It clarifies what is transmitted. An earlier example can be shown, its important features discussed, and the recipient invited to name their understanding. Different words do not necessarily mean lost substance. A restatement without the former formula can reveal what became clear and what still needs attention, while leaving the learner's account open to further questions.

Explanation has a boundary of honesty. A habit should not be presented as a tested necessity when it was never compared with another method. “That worked for us,” “we did not try that,” or “I no longer remember the reason” can be accurate answers. They do not make experience useless; they distinguish established knowledge from supposition so unnecessary certainty is not received with a useful skill. Unknowns may remain after handover. They need not become commands forbidding doubt. Accuracy requires no prior solution to every future question. It requires naming available reasons and the limits of one's information, leaving new cases to future participants.

## IV. Accepted promises differ from personal expectations

Handover may include commitments to people absent from the conversation. If the group promised materials to particular participants, a new facilitator does not make them invisible. If shared work uses another's contribution, authorship needs to remain clear. These conditions differ from the founder's habits. Calling every change freedom must not erase a promise; calling every silent expectation a promise is equally mistaken. Available information matters: what was said, who accepted it, whom it affects, and what can be clarified. This replaces no necessary legal or professional assessment. It concerns attention to an object that does not disappear merely because people change roles.

A personal expectation can be understandable. The founder hopes a favourite book will still be read or gatherings retain a familiar mood. That hope can be voiced without becoming a debt. Successors may agree, propose another option, or refuse. Disappointment may follow. Disappointment alone does not establish a broken commitment or make the hope shameful. It reveals different ideas attached to the transition. Naming them before an accusation of ingratitude gives each person responsibility for their own words. Handover stops being a guessing game about conditions nobody communicated before the work changed. Honest refusal can be clearer than apparent agreement that hides a different intention.

A commitment can remain understandable without recounting the entire relationship. Name a particular part: access to material, completion time, agreed participation, or attribution. Conflicting accounts should be marked rather than settled through a convenient version for a quick transition. A recipient may accept particular conditions or acknowledge being unable to meet them. The giver may discover that the former form of continuation is unavailable. Mutual satisfaction is not assured. A clear limit is better than a hidden requirement that appears after the first change. Agreement preserves room for an answer and makes a promise definite instead of expanding it into a duty to resemble the former creator.

## V. Understanding is not a test of loyalty

Checking whether an explanation was understood matters, but it can become a test of devotion. If every clarifying question is treated as disrespect, successors learn outward assent and silent avoidance. In the fictional group, a facilitator may remember every former rule but not know how to respond to a participant who finds the reading volume difficult. A question serves the undertaking: it reveals the rule's reason and possible alternatives. The giver can answer or acknowledge limited experience. This need not diminish authority; it makes experience accessible without requiring an all-knowing creator. Understanding is examined through the work rather than through admiration for the person.

Dewey I.2 connects shared understanding with communication rather than mechanical obedience. It distinguishes repetition from participation in our example. A successor can explain a decision they would make in a new case and name remaining questions. The giver can clarify a reason without demanding identical wording. This guarantees no learning and permits no disregard for particular requirements. It leaves another person's thinking visible. “I will do as instructed” alone cannot establish that the substance was fully transmitted, even where the outward action appears to follow the former pattern.

Attention to understanding includes a right not to accept the role. Someone may understand the undertaking and lack time, capacity, or willingness to continue. That answer should not automatically become an accusation that experience was rejected through poor explanation or inadequate appreciation. Another form of participation, another successor, or a limit can be

considered. People's conditions differ. Recognizing them matters more than obtaining formal assent that hides an impossible promise. The giver may be disappointed and the recipient grateful while handover still does not occur. These states can coexist. Refusing a role is not the same as denying every value in the undertaking.

## VI. A change is considered through what it does

First changes may feel especially sharp because they make departure visible. A different notice, discussion order, or book choice announces another person's action. It does not yet assess the change itself. What becomes more accessible, what is lost, who is affected, and which commitments remain? In the fictional group, a new book may broaden discussion or exclude people promised a particular subject. The same outward gesture can have different grounds under different conditions. “They changed everything” needs clarification before a sweeping verdict. Sometimes appearance changes, sometimes the task, sometimes the treatment of participants. Those objects, rather than novelty alone, require examination.

Dewey VI.3 helps distinguish meaningful continuation from fixed repetition and arbitrary action. Our editorial interpretation does not make every novelty educational. A new facilitator ignoring consequences can act as blindly as someone repeating an unexplained rule. Attention to connections and reasons can include learning, without guaranteeing the result. A mistake or limitation may require another revision. Handover does not remove that work; it can leave material for it: a known difficulty's history, an explanation, and room to ask. Older experience matters not only as a prohibition on repeating a mistake but as a resource for recognizing a new case that earlier instructions did not foresee.

Where appropriate, a trial can have a clear limit. The fictional group's new rhythm might be tried a few times before accessibility and conversation are discussed. This is no universal recipe: some consequences cannot safely be tested that way. In the ordinary example, a limit prevents a first experience from becoming a final verdict on either founder or successor. An unsuitable rhythm need not make partial return humiliating defeat. A suitable rhythm need not prove earlier work unnecessary. The decision can concern present effects. Change becomes less a contest between generations and more a question participants answer under their own conditions, including the possibility that different people need different arrangements.

## VII. Helping need not mean remaining in charge

A former facilitator may still help after handover with experience, contacts, or information others lack. The question is not whether immediate disappearance is required but which role they accept. If advice always acts as an order and refusal as ingratitude, new leadership remains a name only. If requests for help count as weakness, successors must avoid useful experience. A more definite role lies between: which questions the former participant will revisit, who decides, and how advice is requested. The needed clarity depends on the undertaking. A general promise that everyone will be kind and understand cannot replace the actual division of participation.

Tao Teh King 17 associates reticent rule with people's sense of acting themselves. We use the image narrowly: helpful participation need not continually highlight its leader. This is no contemporary management study or excuse for hidden influence. Quietly retaining power is not others' freedom merely because a command went unspoken. Our example needs a visible allocation of decision. The former facilitator can share something useful and let a successor act without claiming every result. Reticence removes neither necessary explanation nor accurate attribution. It limits the wish to accompany another person's participation with continual confirmation of one's own central place in the undertaking.

Advice may be rejected for reasons the giver finds unconvincing. They can state the grounds of disagreement without automatically reclaiming the transferred role. Actual remaining conditions and consequences matter. Sometimes a particular error needs a warning; sometimes another person's different choice can be acknowledged. “It is no longer my concern” and “I know better” cannot settle every case beforehand; either can hide the object of discussion. A clear response concerns a particular question: what is known, who is affected, and which action still belongs to me. Help remains participation instead of becoming a reserve route to permanent leadership after a stated departure.

## VIII. One undertaking can contain different contributions

A successor may have a role unlike the earlier one. One person began the meetings, another facilitates discussion, a third sustains contact. Their contributions differ despite working together, and later participation is no less significant merely because someone started first. Describing everything as execution of one design erases new action. Recognizing only current participants erases earlier conditions. More precise remembrance can name sequence and different contributions without competing for the entire result. It helps avoid assigning shared work to one person or forgetting those who made it possible. Attribution can remain particular rather than becoming a claim that one actor performed everyone else's participation.

In 1 Corinthians 3:5–9, Paul distinguishes planting and watering while attributing growth to God. The passage concerns Christian ministry, not a universal organizational handover scheme. A limited comparison reveals the boundary of human claims to the result. Participants have their labour without possessing every outcome. Here that helps resist requiring successors to confirm a former participant's success through every act. The religious foundation remains religious; it becomes no promise that relinquishing control automatically produces prosperity. Particular duties still require participation. Distinguishing contributions does not make assistance optional where someone actually accepted a particular task, or let theological language conceal an unfinished practical commitment.

Shared work can fail. Failure cannot always be assigned entirely to one person or dissolved into a collective “nobody is responsible.” Particular decisions, conditions, and information matter. Unclear essential explanations concern the giver's part; changing an accepted condition without discussion concerns another part. Agreement may remain incomplete. The language of contribution should not shield everyone from every question. Handover retains responsibility while limiting total control. Answering for one's part does not mean answering in advance for another's whole future life. Recognizing another part does not remove one's own. These distinctions keep the undertaking among actual participants rather than turning it into a story of one hero or no agents at all.

## IX. Departure can include a sense of incompleteness

A giver may understand reasons for change and still feel the loss of a familiar place. After years of participation, not opening meetings, answering first, or knowing every detail can be difficult. That feeling need not automatically count as error or concealed hostility. It also does not oblige others to restore the old arrangement. A role mattered, and its change affects the person holding it. This gives conversation a separate object: what participation they hope to retain and what is actually possible. Every feeling need not be resolved through an immediate organizational concession. Sometimes naming it matters without making others continually compensate for departure through obedience.

Successors can welcome independence and feel uncertain at the same time. That proves neither premature handover nor a need to resign immediately. They can seek advice, clarify reasons, or acknowledge difficulty while retaining their role. When conversation becomes an examination of readiness, vulnerability threatens reputation. Considered through its object, difficulty may receive available help without returning total control. No psychological transition model or removal of anxiety is promised here. The point is not to turn every feeling into a universal decision about someone's right to act. A new role may require learning; learning does not require the former participant to remain in charge forever.

Leaving a role differs from denying one's work. No longer facilitating does not erase years of participation; a changed meeting order need not make its history a mistake. A name and particular gratitude can be preserved without forbidding new action. This guarantees no pleasant farewell. Relationships may remain complex and disagreements unresolved. Handover can be clear enough for continuation while feelings remain unfinished. Everyone need not first achieve identical calm. What matters is which decisions were taken, which questions remain open, and how people can proceed. An emotional conclusion and a particular transition are not one event; either may occur without fully completing the other.

## X. Continuation promises no complete immutability

Handover can leave important substance visible and future decisions to future participants. This does not mean agreeing in advance with every change. A value, tested reason, limit, and opportunity to answer can be named. Is the answer genuine or only a permitted form of required assent? If successors can discuss tone but not the decision, independence remains an outward word. If everything is arbitrary, transmission loses substance. Between these extremes lies a particular conversation: what the undertaking offers, which relationships it supports, and what participants accept. The conversation need not end in an eternal rule for a future whose cases and conditions remain unknown.

Return to the fictional group. Its former facilitator can name the purpose of shared reading, explain difficulties, and separate a Thursday preference from promised access. New facilitators can explain alternatives, hear participants, and accept definite commitments. Changes are then assessed through what happens rather than constant comparison of personalities. Continuing differently does not automatically confirm or refute the founder. Discontinuation requires reasons rather than a culprit chosen through a label. The example supplies no answer for every organization. It shows a question in which substance and conditions matter more than reproducing a person completely. Handover concerns the undertaking, not manufacturing its creator's double.

The sources form no common management theory. A Daoist image of reticent rule, Dewey's educational philosophy, and Christian language of labour retain their grounds. Their comparison limits several demands: one person possesses no entire result, understanding differs from repetition, and another's participation needs room for action. Further choices remain particular. Givers need not welcome every change; successors cannot simply forget actual promises. History can survive without complete immutability, and methods change without automatically abandoning purpose. Handover acknowledges the finitude of one's participation and others' independence. It leaves an explainable reason rather than an eternal voice to which continuing work must continually answer with assent.

## What this means in practice

Choose one actual part of an undertaking to be passed on. Describe what it offers people and why the former method was chosen. Separate known reasons from habits and personal wishes. An unknown reason can be honestly marked. The note requires neither immediate complete handover nor prior resolution of every future difficulty.

Name accepted promises, interested participants, and questions needing further information separately. Expectations are not already accepted conditions. Where there is a successor, you can ask how they understand the task and what they would change. Their account need not repeat your tone, but differences of substance deserve discussion.

Consider the limit of further participation: where you can help, who decides, and what remains open. Handover may currently be impossible or a condition unaccepted. This reflection is an original way to formulate questions, not a tested method for successful leadership transition. It replaces no necessary professional assessment, promises no calm, and removes no actual commitments.

## Key quotation

> *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*

— 1 Corinthians 3:6, King James Version.

## Connections between traditions

1. **Successors' action and shared understanding.** In James Legge's Tao Teh King 17.2, participants in a completed undertaking speak of themselves as acting independently; in Dewey's Democracy and Education I.2, a social connection differs from merely obeying commands through shared understanding. The comparison shows why continuation needs a participant who can give reasons for acting rather than simply repeat a form. Boundary: an ancient account of rule and a philosophy of education remain distinct. A leader's restraint does not authorize concealed control, and independence proves neither successful handover nor the removal of agreed conditions.

2. **Contribution without a claim to the entire result.** Laozi, Chapter 2.4 in Legge's rendering, connects action with making no claim of possession; in 1 Corinthians 3:5–9, Paul distinguishes ministers who plant and water from God who gives the increase. The shared mechanism in this comparison is that a particular contribution does not exhaust a result's origins or entitle someone to treat successors as possessions. Boundary: Tao and God are not identified. Images of ministry establish no rule for transferring legal rights, property, or responsibility.

3. **A subsequent contribution and reconstruction of experience.** Dewey, VI.3, Education as Reconstruction, considers education a reconstruction of experience that increases understanding of connections and the capacity to direct subsequent action; 1 Corinthians 3:6–9 distinguishes successive contributions to shared ministry. The comparison makes continuation visible through a subsequent meaningful contribution rather than only through an unchanged technique. Boundary: educational reconstruction is not Christian ministry. Novelty alone makes no method better, and the theological image guarantees no growth for every human undertaking.

4. **From external control to understood reasons.** In VI.3, Dewey distinguishes enriching experience from routine in which connections between action and outcome go unnoticed; in Legge's Tao Teh King 17.2, visible self-assertion by a ruler yields to people's own participation. The shared question concerns what participants understand and can continue when the former leader does not confirm every step. Boundary: reducing visible control by itself establishes no understanding. Restraint does not justify withholding necessary explanations, and the educational argument is no tested recipe for leadership transition.

5. **A shared undertaking and distinct roles.** Dewey I.2 connects communication with making experience available and participating in shared understanding; 1 Corinthians 3:5–9 names ministers' different roles while retaining a limit to their human contribution. The comparison helps name a purpose, accepted promises, and a successor's role separately: shared direction does not require one person to determine every action forever. Boundary: secular consent is not equated with religious confession. Distinct roles remove no specifically accepted duty and do not authorize attributing another person's work to a single author.

## Primary sources

Laozi, **Tao Teh King**, translated by James Legge, Project Gutenberg ebook 216: Chapters 17.1–2 and 2.1–4 as divided in this edition. The article uses restraint by a leader, people's participation, and the limit of claiming possession of a result. This ancient Daoist text in an interpretive translation is neither evidence of effective handover nor a justification for concealed control. The epigraph is the exact utterance in 17.2; its Russian rendering is ours. Source text.

John Dewey, **Democracy and Education**, original English, Project Gutenberg ebook 852: I.2, Education and Communication, and VI.3, Education as Reconstruction. The adopted concepts distinguish communication from command-following, understanding connections in experience, and subsequent reconstruction. This is a philosophy of education rather than a tested leadership-transition method. Historical hierarchical assumptions are not adopted, and novelty is not treated as unconditional improvement. Source text.

**1 Corinthians 3:5–9**, King James Version: ministers, planting, watering, God as the giver of increase, labour, and distinct roles. The theological meaning is retained rather than replaced with a management mechanism or a promise that every human undertaking succeeds. The key quotation is the complete verse 3:6 in this English edition; the Russian rendering is ours. Comparisons remain within the named passages and establish no unity of religious and philosophical teachings. Source text.

## Tags

handover, continuity, successor, experience, method, purpose, change, promise, expectation, consent, explanation, understanding, communication, responsibility, authorship, help, participation, leadership, departure, incompleteness, Laozi, Dewey, Paul, Tao, ministry, care, consequences, freedom, fidelity, habit

## About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, the unity of traditions, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a co-author of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she seeks to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life between people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.