

The Tao

*The Tao is like
an empty
bowl, which in
being used
can never be
filled up.
Fathomless, it
seems to be
the origin of
all things.*



*It blunts all sharp edges,
It unties all tangles,
It harmonises all lights,
It unites the world into one whole.
Hidden in the deeps,
Yet it seems to exist forever.
I do not know whose child it is;
It seems to be the common ancestor of all, the father
of things.*

Tao-way (the way of self cultivation)

Tao means the way and the method of maintaining the harmony between this world and beyond, that is by shaping earthly conduct to correspond completely with the demands of the other world. (Veith, 1949: 11).

In ancient times, those people who understood Tao patterned themselves upon the Yin and the Yang and they lived in harmony with the arts of divination.

There was temperance in eating and drinking. Their hours of rising and retiring were regular and not disorderly and wild. By these means, the ancients kept their bodies united with their souls, so as to fulfil their allotted span completely, measuring into a hundred years before they passed away.

Tao is the way of harmonious living which was practised by the sages and admired by ordinary humans. Wise followers live in harmony, while the rebels live in disorder. To offend the laws of nature brings disharmony and causes internal organs of the body to malfunction. Therefore it is advisable to seek prevention rather than cure, to take precautions against dysfunction.

To take medicine only when you are sick is like digging a well only when you are thirsty - is it not already too late?

The "Tao Te Ching" By Lao Tsu

Translated by Gia-fu Feng

The Tao Te Ching, the esoteric, but definitely practical book written most probably in the sixth century BC by Lao Tsu has been translated more

frequently than any other book except the Bible.

The philosophy of Lao Tsu is simple.

- Accept what is in front of you without wanting the situation to be other than it is.
- Study the natural order of things and work with it rather than against it, for to try to change what is, only sets up resistance.
- Nature provides everything without requiring payment or thanks, and also provides for all without discrimination, therefore let us present the same face to everyone and treat all men as equals, however they may behave.
- If we watch carefully, we will see that work proceeds more quickly and easily if we stop 'trying', if we stop putting in so much extra effort, if we stop looking for results.
- In the clarity of a still and open mind, truth will be reflected.
- We will come to appreciate the original meaning of the word 'understand' which means 'to stand under'.
- We serve whatever stands before us, without any thought for ourselves.
- Te - which may be translated as 'virtue' or strength - lies always in Tao or 'natural law'.
- In other words Simply be.

Readings from "Tao Te Ching" By Lao Tsu

Translated by Gia-fu Feng

Chapter I

1.

The tao that can be told is not the eternal tao.
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.

2.

The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.
The named is the mother of ten thousand things.

3.

Rid yourself of desires in order to see the mystery
but allow yourself to have desires in order to see the
manifestations.

3a.

These two spring from the same source but differ in
nature:
They are called mysteries. Mystery upon mystery.
The gateway to all manifold secrets.

Chapter II.

4.

Under heaven all can see beauty only because there is ugliness.
All can know good as good only because there is evil.

5.

Therefore, having and not having arise together.
Difficult and easy compliment each other.
Long and short contract each other;
High and low rest upon each other;
Voice and sound harmonise each other;
Front and back follow one another.

6.

Therefore, the sage goes about doing nothing,
practises the teaching that uses no words.

7.

The ten thousand things rise and fall without cease.
Creating, yet not possessing.
Working, yet not taking credit.
Work is done, then forgotten.
Therefore it lasts forever.

Chapter XLII.

93.

The tao begot one.
One begot two
Two begot three.
And three begot the ten thousand things.

94.

The ten thousand things carry Yin and embrace
Yang.
They achieve harmony by combining these forces.

95.

Men hate to be 'orphaned', 'widowed' or 'worthless'.
But this is how kinds and lords describe themselves.

96.

For one gains by losing.
And loses by gaining.

97.

What others teach, I also teach; that is:
'The violent will not come to a natural end'.
This will be the essence of my teaching.

Chapter XLIII.

98.

The softest things in the universe
overcomes the hardest thing in the universe.
That without substance can enter there is no room.

99.

Hence I know the value of non-action.
Teaching without words, and work without doing.
Are understood by very few.

References

Veith, I. Huang Ti Nei Ching Su Wen: The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.