

Tao Te Ching by Lao-Tse

ON THE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE:

1: The Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is
1 enduring and unchanging name.

4: I do not know whose son it (Tao) is. It might appear to have been before God.

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2 There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth. How
5: and formless, standing alone, and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger (of
1 exhausted)! It may be regarded as the Mother of all things.

(2) I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of the Tao (the Way or Course). Making an
(further) to give it a name I call it The Great.

(3) Great, it passes on (in constant flow). Passing on, it becomes remote. Having become remote, it r
Therefore the Tao is great; Heaven is great; Earth is great; and the (sage) king is also great. In the un
are four that are great, and the (sage) king is one of them.

(4) Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from
The law of the Tao is its being what it is.

ON TAO:

3 The Tao, considered as unchanging, has no name.

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3 Though in its primordial simplicity it may be small, the whole world dares not deal with (one embod
2: minister. If a feudal prince or the king could guard and hold it, all would spontaneously submit them

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3 Heaven and Earth (under its guidance) unite together and send down the sweet dew, which, without
3: of men, reaches equally everywhere as of its own accord.

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(4)As soon as it proceeds to action, it has a name. When it once has that name, (men) can know to re
they know to rest in it, they can be free from all risk of failure and error.

(5)The relation of the Tao to all the world is like that of the great rivers and seas to the streams from
3 The Tao in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so there is nothing which it

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ON GOVERNMENT:

3: Not to value and employ men of superior ability is the way to keep the people from rivalry among th
1 to prize articles which are difficult to procure is the way to keep them from becoming thieves; not to
what is likely to excite their desires is the way to keep their minds from disorder.

(2) Therefore the sage, in the exercise of his government, empties their minds, fills their bellies, wea
wills, and strengthens their bones.

(3) He constantly (tries to) keep them without knowledge and without desire, and where there are the knowledge, to keep them from presuming to act (on it). When there is this abstinence from action, go universal.

8 I would make the people return to the use of knotted cords (instead of the written characters).

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3 (4) They should think their (coarse) food sweet; their (plain) clothes beautiful; their (poor) dwellings rest; and their common (simple) ways sources of enjoyment.

(5) There should be a neighbouring state within sight, and the voices of the fowls and dogs should be way from it to us, but I would make the people to old age, even to death, not have any intercourse w

ON WAR:

4 When the Tao prevails in the world, they send back their swift horses to (draw) the dung-carts. When
6: disregarded in the world, the war-horses breed in the border lands.

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6 There is no calamity greater than lightly engaging in war. To do that is near losing (the gentleness) v
9: precious. Thus it is that when opposing weapons are (actually) crossed, he who deplores (the situati

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ON WISDOM:

2 Therefore the sage holds in his embrace the one thing (of humility), and manifests it to all the world.
2: from self-display, and therefore he shines; from self-assertion, and therefore he is distinguished; from
2 boasting, and therefore his merit is acknowledged; from self-complacency, and therefore he acquires
It is because he is thus free from striving that therefore no one in the world is able to strive with him
2 He who stands on his tiptoes does not stand firm; he who stretches his legs does not walk (easily). (S
4 displays himself does not shine; he who asserts his own views is not distinguished; he who vaunts hi
not find his merit acknowledged; he who is self-conceited has no superiority allowed to him. Such c
viewed from the standpoint of the Tao, are like remnants of food, or a tumour on the body, which all
Hence those who pursue (the course) of the Tao do not adopt and allow them.

3 He who knows other men is discerning; he who knows himself is intelligent. He who overcomes oth
3: he who overcomes himself is mighty. He who is satisfied with his lot is rich; he who goes on acting
1 has a (firm) will.