

**DAOISM**  
(Primary Source Document)

**Lao Zi (c. 6th Century B.C.E.)**

The following are selections from the *Lao Zi* (*Lao Tzu, The Old Master*) also called the *Dao De Jing* (*Tao Te Ching, the Classic of the Way and of Virtue*). These translations are based on D.C. Lau, *Tao Te Ching*.

**On the Way**

- [1] The way begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures. (42)
  
- [2] The way never acts yet nothing is left undone.  
Should lords and princes be able to hold fast to it.  
The myriad creatures will be transformed of their own accord. (37)
  
- [3] The way of heaven excels in overcoming though it does not contend,  
In responding though it does not speak,  
In attracting though it does not summon,  
In laying plans though it appears slack.  
The net of heaven is cast wide.  
Though the mesh is not fine, yet nothing ever slips through. (73)

**On the Sage**

- [4] Heaven and earth are ruthless, and they treat the myriad creatures as straw dogs; the sage is ruthless, and he treats the people as straw dogs. (5)
  
- [5] To use words but rarely  
Is to be natural.  
Hence a gusty wind cannot last all morning, and a sudden downpour cannot last all day.  
Who is it that produces these? Heaven and earth.  
If even heaven and earth cannot go on for ever, much less can man. That is why one follows the way. (23)
  
- [6] Therefore the sage avoids excess, extravagance, and arrogance. (29)
  
- [7] Excessive meanness  
Is sure to lead to great expense;  
Too much stored

Is sure to end in immense loss.  
 Know contentment  
 And you will suffer no disgrace;  
 Know when to stop  
 And you will meet with no danger.  
 You can then endure. (44)

- [8] When the great way falls into disuse  
 There are benevolence and rectitude;  
 When cleverness emerges  
 There is great hypocrisy;  
 When the six relations are at variance  
 There are filial children;  
 When the state is benighted  
 There are loyal ministers. (18)

- [9] (The sage) without stirring abroad  
 One can know the whole world;  
 Without looking out of the window  
 One can see the way of heaven.  
 The further one goes  
 The less one knows.  
 Therefore the sage knows without having to stir,  
 Identifies without having to see,  
 Accomplishes without having to act. (47)

- [10] The sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action and practices the teaching that uses no words. The myriad creatures are benefited but know not whom to thank. For he creates but does not possess, helps but exacts no gratitude, brings success but claims no credit. And because he claims no credit, he is never discredited (2)

#### On Troubles and Solutions

- [11] The reason I have great trouble is that I have a body,  
 When I no longer have a body, what trouble have I? (13)
- [12] There is no crime greater than having too many desires;  
 There is no disaster greater than not being content;  
 There is no misfortune greater than being covetous.  
 Hence in being content, one will always have enough. (46)
- [13] Highest good is like water. Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the way. (8)



Lao Zi, after a Ming dynasty painting in the Palace Museum. Reproduced as published in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, edited by William Theodore de Bary, et. al., copyright 1960, with the kind permission of the copyright owner, Columbia University Press, New York, NY.

[14] Man models himself on earth,  
Earth on heaven,  
Heaven on the way,  
And the way on that which is  
naturally so.

[15] When the government is muddled  
The people are simple;  
When the government is alert  
The people are cunning. (58)

[16] Exterminate the sage, discard the  
wise,  
And the people will benefit a hun-  
dredfold;  
Disregard benevolence, spurn  
rectitude,  
And the people will again be fil-  
ial;  
Dismiss ingenuity, eliminate  
profit,  
And there will be no more thieves  
and bandits. (19)

[17] The more taboos there are in the empire  
The poorer the people;  
The more sharpened tools the people have  
The more benighted the state;  
The more skills the people have  
The further novelties multiply;  
The better known the laws and edicts  
The more thieves and robbers there are. (57)

[18] Governing a large state is like cooking a small fish. (60)

[19] The people are hungry:  
It is because those in authority eat up too much in taxes  
That the people are hungry.  
The people are difficult to govern:  
It is because those in authority are too fond of action  
That the people are difficult to govern. (75)

[20] Indeed, it has been a long time since the people were not misguided. Therefore,  
the sage corrects but does not cut down, rectifies but does not injure, straightens  
but does not overpower, enlightens but does not dazzle. (58)

- [21] I have three treasures  
Which I hold and cherish.  
The first is known as compassion,  
The second is known as frugality,  
The third is known as not daring to take the lead in the empire;  
Being compassionate one can afford to be courageous,  
Being frugal one can afford to extend one's territory,  
Not daring to take the lead in the empire one can afford to be lord over  
the vassals. (67)
- [22] In ruling the people and in serving heaven it is best for a ruler to be sparing.  
(59)
- [23] Not to honor men of worth will keep the people from contention; not to  
value goods which are hard to come by will keep them from theft; not to  
display what is desirable will keep them from being unsettled of mind. (3)
- [24] The sage says,  
"I take no action and the people are transformed of themselves;  
I am not meddlesome and the people prosper of themselves;  
I am free from desire and the people of themselves become simple  
like the uncarved block." (57)
- [25] Of old those who excelled in the pursuit of the way did not use it to  
enlighten the people but to hoodwink them. The reason why the people  
are difficult to govern is that they are too clever.
- Hence to rule a state by cleverness  
Will be to the detriment of the state;  
Not to rule a state by cleverness  
Will be a boon to the state. (65)
- [26] Do that which consists in taking no action, and order will prevail. (3)
- [27] The sage in his attempt to distract the mind of the empire seeks urgently  
to muddle it. The people all have something to occupy their eyes and ears,  
and the sage treats them all like children. (49)

**Zhuang Zi (369-286 B.C.E.)**

The following are selections drawn from the *Zhuang Zi (Chuang Tzu)*, a work attributed to Zhuang Zhou (Chuang Chou). The first selection here is translated in Charles O. Hucker, *China's Imperial Past*, the second and third are from W. Theodore de Bary et al, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*.

- [1] Once upon a time Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly, and he flew about enjoying himself, unaware that he was Zhou. But when he suddenly waked up, he was the same Zhou as always. He does not know whether he is Zhou and only dreamed he was a butterfly or whether he is a butterfly now dreaming it is Zhou. Yet there is a definite difference between Zhou and a butterfly. This is what is called a transformation.
- [2] Zhuang Zi and Hui Zi (Hui Tzu) were strolling one day on the bridge over the River Hao, when the former observed, "See how the minnows are darting about! Such is the pleasure that fish enjoy." "You are not a fish," said Hui Zi. "How do you know what fish enjoy?"

"You are not I," retorted Zhuang Zi, "so how do you know that I do not know what fish enjoy?" "I am not you," said Hui Zi, "and so evidently I do not know what you know. But it is also evident that you are not a fish, and so it is certain that you do not know what fish enjoy."

"Let us go back," said Zhuang Zi, "to your original question. You asked me how I knew what fish enjoy. The way you put the question shows that you already knew that I knew. I know it just as we stand here over the Hao."

- [3] Whereby is the Dao [Tao, the Way] so debased that there should be a distinction of true and false? Whereby is speech so debased that there should be a distinction between right and wrong? How could the Dao depart and be not there? And how could there be speech and yet it be not appropriate? The Dao is debased by petty virtues. Speech is debased by flowery eloquence. So it is that we have the contentions between the Confucianists and the Mohists, each affirming what the other denies and denying what the other affirms. But if we are to decide on their several affirmations and denials, there is nothing better than to employ the light of reason.

Everything is its own self, everything is something else's other. . . . Besides, where there is life, there is death; and where there is death, there is life. Where there is impossibility, there is possibility; and where there is possibility, there is impossibility. It is because there is right, that there is wrong; it is because there is wrong, that there is right. . . .

**LEGALIST THOUGHT**  
(Primary Source Document)

Shang Yang (d. 338 B.C.E.)

This first set of selections is taken from *The Book of Lord Shang* and are based on J. J. L. Duyvendak's translation of this work. Shang Yang served as the prime minister of Qin (Ch'in), the state which a century later achieved, through military conquest, the unification of China. The numbers in parenthesis following each selection indicate its place in the Chinese original.

- [1] Gongsun Yang (K'ung-sun Yang) said, Former generations did not follow the same doctrines, so which past precedents should one obey? Emperors and kings of the past did not copy one another, so what rites should one follow? . . . (1)
- [2] Government based on the assumption that people are essentially good will lead the state to chaos and dismemberment. Government based on the assumption that people are essentially bad will lead the state to order and strength. . . . (5)
- [3] Those who govern a state would want the people to take to agriculture. If the state does not take to agriculture, then, in its struggle against other states, it will not be able to survive, because the strength of its people will not be sufficient. In such a case the other states will take advantage of its weakness and encroach upon its territory and render it feeble beyond saving. . . .

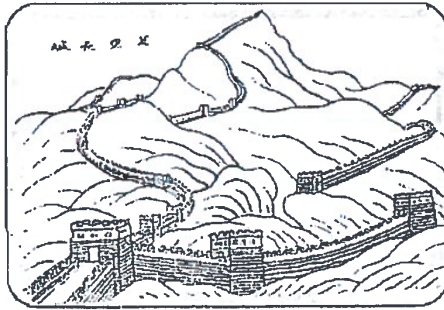
The means, whereby a ruler of men encourages the people, are office and rank; the means, whereby a country is made prosperous, are agriculture and war. Now those, who seek office and rank, never do so by means of agriculture and war, but by artful words and empty doctrines. That is called "wearying the people." The country of those, who weary their people, will certainly have no strength, and the country of those, who have no strength, will certainly be dismembered. . . .

If, in a country, there are the following ten things: odes and history, rites and music, virtue and the cultivation thereof, benevolence and integrity, sophistry and intelligence, then the ruler has no one whom he can employ for defence and warfare. If a country is governed by means of these ten things, it will be dismembered, as soon as an enemy approaches, and, even if no enemy approaches, it will be poor. But if a country banishes these ten things, enemies will not dare to approach, and even if they should, they would be driven back. When it mobilizes its army and attacks, it will gain victories; when it holds the army in reserve, and does not attack, it will be



rich. A country that loves strength makes assaults with what is difficult and thus it will be successful. A country that loves sophistry makes assaults with what is easy and thus it will be in danger. (3)

- [4] Sophistry and cleverness are an aid to disorder. . . . (5)



The Great Wall, first built under the Qin dynasty

- [5] If study [of rhetoric] becomes popular, people will abandon agriculture and occupy themselves with debates, high-sounding words and discussions on false premises; abandoning agriculture, they will live on others in idleness and seek to surpass one another with words. Thus the people will become estranged from the ruler and there will be crowds of disloyal subjects. This is a way which leads to the impoverishment of the state and to the weakening of the army. (3)

- [6] The six parasites are: rites and music, Odes and History [two of the traditional Chinese classics], moral culture and virtue, filial piety and brotherly love, sincerity and faith, chastity and integrity, benevolence and righteousness, repudiation of arms, and being ashamed of fighting. If there are these twelve things, the ruler is unable to make people farm and fight, and then the state will be so poor that it will be dismembered. (13)
- [7] [A state which knows how to produce strength] will bar all private roads for gratification of the people's ambitions and open only one gate through which the people can attain their desires. It will make the people first do what they hate, in order, thereafter, to reach what they desire. . . . (5)
- [8] If people are not allowed to change their abode without authorization, then those wicked people who abandon farming will have no means of subsistence and will certainly turn to agriculture. . . .

If hostels for travelers are abolished, then the preposterous, the unsettled, those who engage in unauthorized professions, and those who doubt the worth of agriculture will be unable to travel, and those who are on the road will have no place to eat. This being so, they will certainly become farmers and so it is certain waste lands will be brought under cultivation. . . .

If it is impossible to hire workers, high officials and sires of great families will not be able to build their estates and their beloved sons cannot eat in laziness. If the lazy cannot stay idle and hirelings do not find a livelihood, there will certainly be agriculture. . . . (2)

- [9] [As a result of the legal education] government officials as well as the people of the world all know the law. As an official knows that the people know the law, he would not dare to treat them unlawfully; as the people know the law they would not dare to violate the law and offend the law officer. . . . (26)

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### Han Fei Zi (d. 280-233 B.C.E.)

This second collection of Legalist thought is drawn from the Han Fei Zi (Han Fei Tzu). These selections are based on the translation in Burton Watson, *Basic Writings of Han Fei Tzu*.

- [1] The ruler must not reveal his desires; for if he reveals his desires his ministers will put on the mask that pleases him. He must not reveal his will; for if he does so his ministers will show a different face. So it is said: Discard likes and dislikes and the ministers will show their true form; discard wisdom and wile and the ministers will watch their step. . . .

This is the way of the enlightened ruler: he causes the wise to bring forth all their schemes, and he decides his affairs accordingly; hence his own wisdom is never exhausted. He uses the worthy to display their talents, and he employs them accordingly; hence his own worth never comes to an end. Where there are accomplishments, the ruler takes credit for their worth; where there are errors, the ministers are held responsible for the blame; hence the ruler's name never suffers. Thus, though the ruler is not worthy himself, he is the leader of the worthy; though he is not wise himself, he is the corrector of the wise. The ministers have the labor; the ruler enjoys the success. . . . (5)

- [2] No state is forever strong or forever weak. If those who uphold the law are strong, the state will be strong; if they are weak, the state will be weak. . . .

In our present age he who can put an end to private scheming and make men uphold the public law will see his people secure and his state well ordered; he who can block selfish pursuits and enforce the public law will see his armies growing stronger and his enemies weakening. . . .



If rewards are handed out on the basis of good report alone, and punishments on the basis of slander, then men who covet rewards and fear punishment will abandon the public interest and pursue only private schemes, banding together to further each other's interests. . . .

In such cases, the officials will turn their backs on law, seeking only to establish weighty personal connections and making light of public duty. . . .

But the powerful families seek only to benefit each other and not to enrich the state; the high ministers seek only to honor each other and not honor their sovereign; and the petty officials cling to their stipends and work to make influential friends instead of attending to their duties. . . . (6)

[3] The enlightened ruler controls his ministers by means of two handles alone. The two handles are punishment and favor. What do I mean by punishment and favor? To inflict mutilation and death on men is called punishment; to bestow honor and reward is called favor.

[4] . . . When one house has two venerables, its affairs will never prosper. When husband and wife both give orders, the children are at a loss to know which one to obey.

The ruler of men must prune his trees [eliminate some officials] from time to time and not let them grow too thick for, if they do they will block his gate. . . . (8)

[5] These are the ten faults [of a ruler]:

1. To practice petty loyalty and thereby betray a larger loyalty.
2. To fix your eye on a petty gain and thereby lose a larger one.
3. To behave in a base and willful manner and show no courtesy to the other feudal lords, . . . .
4. To give no ear to government affairs but long only for the sound of music. . . .
5. To be greedy, perverse, and too fond of profit. . . .
6. To become infatuated with women musicians and disregard state affairs. . . .
7. To leave the palace for distant travels, despising the remonstrances of your ministers. . . .

8. To fail to heed your loyal ministers when you are at fault, insisting upon having your own way. . . .
  9. To take no account of internal strength but rely solely upon your allies abroad. . . .
  10. To ignore the demands of courtesy, though your state is small, and fail to learn from the remonstrances of your ministers. . . . (10)
- [6] . . . the difficult thing about persuading others is not that one lacks the knowledge needed to state his case nor the audacity to exercise his abilities to the full. On the whole, the difficult thing about persuasion is to know the mind of the person one is trying to persuade and to be able to fit one's words to it. . . . (12)
- [7] It is hazardous for the ruler of men to trust others, for he who trusts others will be controlled by others. . . . (17)
- [8] . . . But nowadays no one regards five sons as a large number, and these five sons in turn have five sons each, so that before the grandfather has died, he has twenty-five grandchildren. Hence the number of people increases, goods grow scarce, and men have to struggle and slave for a meager living. Therefore they fall to quarreling, and though rewards are doubled and punishments are piled on, they cannot be prevented from growing disorderly. . . .

Hence, when men of ancient times made light of material goods, it was not because they were benevolent, but because there was a surplus of goods; and when men quarrel and snatch today, it is not because they are vicious, but because goods have grown scarce. . . .

Past and present have different customs; new and old adopt different measures. To try to use the ways of a generous and lenient government to rule the people of a critical age is like trying to drive a runaway horse without using reins or whip. . . .

An enlightened ruler will administer his state in such a way as to decrease the number of merchants, artisans, and other men who make their living by wandering from place to place, and will see to it that such men are looked down upon. In this way he lessens the number of people who abandon primary pursuits [i.e. agriculture] to take up secondary occupations. . . . (49)

- [9] When a sage rules the state, he does not depend on people's doing good of themselves; he sees to it that they are not allowed to do what is bad. . . .

Therefore the enlightened ruler works with facts and discards useless theories. He does not talk about deeds of benevolence and righteousness, and he does not listen to the words of scholars. . . . (50)