



Lao Tzu quotes

By Lao Tzu

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Laozi (also Lao-Tzu or Lao-Tze) was a philosopher and poet of ancient China. He is known as the reputed author of the Tao Te Ching and the founder of philosophical Taoism, and as a deity in religious Taoism and traditional Chinese religions. Although a legendary figure, he is usually dated to around the 6th century BCE and reckoned a contemporary of Confucius, but some historians contend that he actually lived during the Warring States period of the 5th or 4th century BCE. A central figure in Chinese culture, Laozi is claimed by both the emperors of the Tang dynasty and modern people of the Li surname as a founder of their lineage. Throughout history, Laozi's work has been embraced by various anti-authoritarian movements.

Taoism (sometimes Daoism) is a philosophical, ethical or religious tradition of Chinese origin, or faith of Chinese exemplification, that emphasizes living in harmony with the Tao (also romanized as Dao). The term Tao means "way", "path", "principle", or "god", and can also be found in Chinese philosophies and religions other than Taoism. In Taoism, however, Tao denotes something that is both the source of, and the force behind, everything that exists.

Taoism is practiced as a religion in various Asian communities, but its theology is not theist (even though some communities do worship Laozi as the attributed founder of the religious doctrine), and has more affinities with pantheistic traditions given its philosophical emphasis on the formlessness of the Tao. Taoism drew its cosmological notions from the tenets of the School of Yin Yang, and is heavily influenced and informed by the acknowledged oldest text of ancient Chinese classics, the I Ching, which prescribes a system of philosophical thought on the ethics of human behaviours based on articulating cycles of change in the natural and social worlds by means of gua or hexagrams, and includes instructions for divination practice still adhered to by modern-day religious Taoists. The Tao Te Ching, a compact and ambiguous book containing teachings attributed to Laozi (Chinese: 老子; pinyin: Lǎozǐ; Wade–Giles: Lao Tzu), is widely considered the keystone work of this philosophy. Together with the writings of Zhuangzi, which interprets and adds to the teaching of Laozi, these classic texts provide the philosophical foundation of Taoism deriving from the 8 trigrams (bagua) of Fu Xi in the 2700s BCE in China, the various combinations of which creates the 64 hexagrams as documented in the I Ching.

Taoist propriety and ethics may vary depending on the particular school, but in general they tend to emphasize wu-wei (action through non-action), "naturalness", simplicity, spontaneity, and the Three Treasures: compassion, moderation, and humility.

Taoism has had profound influence on Chinese culture in the course of the centuries, and clerics of institutionalised Taoism (Chinese: 道士; pinyin: dàoshi) usually take care to note distinction between their ritual tradition and the customs and practices found in Chinese folk religion as these distinctions sometimes appear blurred. Chinese alchemy (especially neidan), Chinese astrology, Chan (Zen) Buddhism, several martial arts, traditional Chinese medicine, feng shui, and many styles of qigong have been intertwined with Taoism throughout history. Beyond China, Taoism also had influence on surrounding societies in Asia.

After Laozi and Zhuangzi, the literature of Taoism grew steadily and was compiled in form of a canon—the Daozang—which was published at the behest of the emperor. Throughout Chinese history, Taoism was several times nominated as a state religion. After the 17th century, however, it fell from favor.

Today, Taoism is one of five religions officially recognized in China, and although it does not travel readily from its Asian roots, claims adherents in a number of societies. Taoism also has sizable communities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and in Southeast Asia.

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