

Teachings of tao te ching by lao tzu

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Teachings of Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu

Of the many chapters and verses of the Tao Te Ching, one that really influenced me was on knowledge. The translation by J. Legge puts it as: He who knows other men is discerning; he who knows himself is intelligent. He who overcomes others is strong; he who overcomes himself is mighty. He who is satisfied with his lot is rich; he who goes on acting with energy has a (firm) will. He, who does not fail in the requirements of his position, continues long; he, who dies and yet does not perish, has longevity (Lao Tzu, 33).

As a student, I find it particularly significant as it provides an alternative perspective on learning and education. Lao Tzu puts forth knowledge of humanity and self-knowledge as primary subjects to focus our learning on. This is still relevant as although we study subjects like Biology, Social Sciences and Literature which may appear very different, at one level they are all attempts to understand the world around us and ourselves better. This passage also speaks of discipline and power. However, Lao Tzu seems to advocate control of oneself over control of others. This injunction to control our senses is present in ancient Hindu philosophy as well, especially in the epic Bhagavad Gita. The Bible also speaks of controlling the self in its gospels. For instance, in Peter 2: 19, we are told, ' For whatever a person succumbs to, to that he is enslaved.' This idea of discipline is often ignored in our daily lives but as Lao Tzu asserts learning to control oneself and one's own impulses is actually a mark of great strength. Since we cannot control the world and what it does to us, it is only sensible that we learn to control our own behavior instead. This way we are not left frustrated and feeling

helpless at difficult situations that come our way.

Lao Tzu also brings out the importance of looking at one thing from more than one perspective. As mentioned above, he already provides a counterview to the usual meaning of education. Moreover, in the later lines he mentions how a person who is happy with what he has is 'rich'. However, this does not mean that someone who is unhappy with his lot is 'poor.' Instead, Lao Tzu says that the person who seeks to have more than what he already possesses, that is to say someone ambitious, has great power of will. Lao Tzu therefore does not criticize as much as he tries to present both sides of a picture. This is a great lesson to learn when dealing with things in our everyday lives. Many conflicts may be resolved if we learn to look at one thing from a different perspective.

Lao Tzu also speaks of spiritual immortality when he says that to live beyond one's death is truly longevity. As it is not humanly possible to live forever, Lao Tzu seems to mean that we should strive to be alive in memory after we are dead. This can be done through our actions, our words and the sum total of our behavior while alive. There is living proof of this statement everywhere we see. We remember celebrities who made us laugh or cry in a film, we remember saints like Mother Theresa who dedicated their lives to the welfare of the poor. Even though these great people have passed on, they are remembered for generations after. This is the ideal that all of us should strive to be, according to Lao Tzu.

Work Cited

Lao Tzu. Tao Te Ching. Trans. J. Legge. Sacred Books of the East Vol. 39. 1891. Web. 30 Nov. 2011.

<https://assignbuster.com/teachings-of-tao-te-ching-by-lao-tzu/>