

Directions

Annotate these excerpts from the Tao Te Ching, the collection of teachings from Taoist master Lao-tzu.
Focus on this question: HOW DOES ONE LIVE A GOOD LIFE?

1. When people see some things as beautiful,
Other things become ugly.
When people see some things as good,
Other things become bad.
Being and non-being create each other.
Difficult and easy support each other.
Long and short define each other.
High and low depend on each other.
Before and after follow each other.

2. In dwelling, live close to the ground.
In thinking, keep to the simple.
In conflict, be fair and generous.
In governing, don't try to control.
In work, do what you enjoy.
In family life, be completely present.

3. The Master doesn't talk, he acts.
When his work is done, the people say,
"Amazing: We did it, all by ourselves!"

4. The more laws and order are made prominent,
the more thieves and robbers there will be.

5. Knowing others is intelligence;
knowing yourself is true wisdom.
Mastering others is strength;
mastering yourself is true power.

6. The more you know, the less you understand.

7. The Master does his job and then stops.
He understands that the universe
is forever out of control,
and that trying to dominate events
goes against the current of the Tao.
Because he believes in himself,
he doesn't try to convince others.
Because he is content with himself,
he doesn't need others' approval.
Because he accepts himself,
the whole world accepts him.

8. The Master doesn't try to be powerful;
thus he is truly powerful.
The ordinary man keeps reaching for power;
thus he never has enough.
The Master does nothing,
yet he leaves nothing undone.
The ordinary man is always doing things,
yet many more are left to be done.

9. When a superior man hears of the Tao,
he immediately begins to embody it.
When an average man hears of the Tao,
he half believes it, half doubts it.
When a foolish man hears of the Tao,
he laughs out loud.

10. Ordinary men hate solitude,
but the Master makes use of it,
embracing his aloneness,
realizing he is one with the whole universe.

11. Be content with what you have;
rejoice in the way things are.
When you realize there is nothing lacking,
the whole world belongs to you.

12. True mastery can be gained
by letting things go their own way.
It can't be gained by interfering.

13. The Master has no mind of her own.
She works with the mind of the people.
She is good to people who are good.
She is also good to people who aren't good.
This is true goodness.
She trusts people who are trustworthy.
She also trusts people who aren't trustworthy.
This is true trust.

14. In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired.
In the pursuit of Tao, every day something is dropped.

15. The Tao is always present and always available. . .
If you are willing to be lived by it, you will see it everywhere,
even in the most ordinary things.