

Ethics of Tao Te Ching

Compiled by V. Antonov

*Translated from 1991 Russian revised edition of
"Fundamentals of the World Religious Ethics"
by T. Danilevich*

To withdraw when the work is finished, that is the way of heaven.

The gates of heaven are closed and opened with the calm preserved. Knowing this truth you can refrain from action 1.

Efforts of a sage are directed to satisfying the stomach and not the sight of the eyes.

Honor and disgrace are startling. High rank involves acute distress. What is the meaning of 'high rank involves acute distress' ? It means that I suffer most because of selfishness. If I were selfless, then what suffering would I bear?

Returning to the Source is called peace, and peace is called returning to life.

...A sage does not compete, that is why no one can overcome him...

On tiptoe your stance is unsteady (for long). Calm is the master of movement.

To rejoice in victory (on battlefield) is to delight in murder. Victory should be commemorated with mourning ritual.

The Tao 2 is a tender being, no one can conquer it nonetheless.

The pursuit of learning results in daily increase (of knowledge). Following the Tao leads to daily decrease (of desires). Decreasing endlessly one reaches non-action. Through non-action, no action is left undone.

One who is good at mastering life is not afraid of tigers and rhinoceroses on land, in battle he is not scared by weapons. The rhinoceros has no place to jab its horn, the tiger has no place to fasten its claws, weapons have no place to insert their blades. Why so? Death does not exist for him 3.

Giving birth yet not possessing, working yet not taking credit, leading yet not dominating, this is the Supreme Virtue. (A sage) is bright yet not dazzling.

Requite hatred with love. (A sage) possesses nothing and thus nothing he loses 4. If (a sage) wants to be above the folk, he must put himself beneath. If he wishes to be out front he must stand behind others.

Therefore, he is up above but is no burden to the folk, he is ahead of all to see they do not come to harm... Since he does not contend, the world can not contend with him.

A wise general is not violent. A good warrior does not rage. A mighty conqueror does not give battle. One who is good at ruling others puts himself below them.

To know that you are ignorant is a virtue.

He who is brave and bellicose will be killed, he who is brave yet not will survive...Who knows the reason for dislike of bellicosity? Even sage is in difficulty to answer.

Big turmoil leaves consequences. Calm may be called goodness. For this reason a sage swears he will never condemn anyone.

He who knows does not argue, he who argues does not know.

I possess three treasures that I cherish. The first is compassion, the is frugality, and the third is that I dare not to be ahead of all under heaven.

Because I am compassionate, I can be brave. Because I am frugal, I can be generous.
Because I dare not be ahead of all under heaven, I can be a leader.

Affair must be in keeping with possibilities, action must be in keeping with time.

I do good to good ones, to those who are not good I also do good.

1 'Non-action' implies among other putting the end to mental activity during the time of meditative training, which allows to practice meditation. The matter is meditation is the activity of consciousness and not mind. In other words, 'non-action' of mind makes 'action' of consciousness possible.

2 The idea of Lao-tzu and Taoism is that the Tao is God. (In Confucianism there is another meaning of this word - 'the Way').

3 Comments see in [2].

4 That is he is not attached to things and thus ready to depart with them easily.



[main page](#)