

**"REGARD YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GAIN AS YOUR OWN GAIN AND YOUR NEIGHBOR'S LOSS AS YOUR OWN LOSS.
RELATE YOURSELF TO EVERY MAN AS IF YOU WERE IN HIS PLACE. RECOMPENSE INJURY WITH KINDNESS."**
— LAO-TSE (604 BCE) T'AI SHANG KAN YING P' IEN

TAOISM — An Overview

Inception: Lao Tse 580-500 BCE

Adherents: 2.7 Million [EBI Estimate]

Primary Value Proposition: The Divine Way

The Word of (about and/or attributed to) God:

- How pure and tranquil is the Supreme One and yet how powerful and mighty, how deep and unfathomable! This God of heaven is the honored ancestor of all things.
- This Great One imparts himself to men and thereby enables them to excel and to survive.
- Even if one has but a little knowledge, he can still walk in the ways of the Supreme; he can conform to the will of heaven.
- All good works of true service come from the Supreme. All things depend on the Great Source for life.
- He unceasingly transmutes his attributes while perfecting his creatures.
- The heavenly Reason is slow and patient in his designs but sure of his accomplishments.
- How great and mighty are his overflowing influence and drawing power!
- The Supreme creates all things, in nature nourishing them and in spirit perfecting them. And it is a mystery how the Supreme fosters, protects, and perfects the creature without compelling him. He guides and directs, but without self-assertion. He ministers progression, but without domination.
- The wise man universalizes his heart.
- He is a wise man who regards all parts from the point of view of the whole.
- The Great Supreme is all-pervading; he is on the left hand and on the right; he supports all creation and indwells all true beings.
- If you seek for him daily, you shall find him.
- If you abide in the light of the Eternal, you shall enjoy the enlightenment of the Supreme.

Core Beliefs: The word Tao (or Dao, depending on the romanization scheme), roughly translates as "path" or "way". Taoist propriety and ethics emphasize the Three Jewels of the Tao: compassion, moderation, and humility, while Taoist thought generally focuses on nature, the relationship between humanity and the cosmos. Believers hold that Tao produces all things and all things go back to this common origin thereby blending into one.

Lao taught that man's eternal destiny was "everlasting union with Tao, Supreme God and Universal King." He was a man of great spiritual vision whose comprehension of ultimate causation was reflected in his prose: "Unity arises out of the Absolute Tao, and from Unity there appears cosmic Duality, and from such Duality, Trinity springs forth into existence, and Trinity is the primal source of all reality." "All reality is ever in balance between the potentials and the actuals of the cosmos, and these are eternally harmonized by the spirit of divinity."

Taoists believe in embodiment and pragmatism, engaging practice to actualize the natural order within themselves. Certain core beliefs relate to the symbology of the Tai-Chi, or Yin Yang symbol, and the notion of wu-wei (action through inaction) which seek to counterbalance Yin with Yang at every opportunity. Lao never sanctioned the beliefs of "seeing, doing, and thinking nothing" although he did teach nonresistance making a clear distinction between action and coercion.

Wu wei is a central concept in Taoism. It is often expressed by the paradox wei wu wei, meaning "action without action" or "effortless doing". The goal of wu wei is alignment with Tao, revealing the soft and invisible power within all things. It is believed by Taoists that masters of wu wei can observe and follow this invisible potential, the innate in-action of the Way.

In ancient Taoist texts, wu wei is associated with water through its yielding nature. Taoist philosophy proposes that the universe works harmoniously according to its own ways. When someone exerts their will against the world, they may disrupt that harmony. Taoism does not identify one's will as the root problem. Rather, it asserts that one must place their will in harmony with the natural universe. The goal at this stage of existence is to attain an abundance of life by alignment and attunement with the Tao.