

# Selections from the *Dao De Jing* · 道德經

Lao Tzu

## 1

道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名。  
無名天地之始；有名萬物之母。  
故常無欲，以觀其妙；常有欲，以觀其徼。  
此兩者，同出而異名，同謂之玄。  
玄之又玄，衆妙之門。

The Dao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Dao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name. (Conceived of as) having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; (conceived of as) having a name, it is the Mother of all things. Always without desire we must be found, If its deep mystery we would sound; But if desire always within us be, Its outer fringe is all that we shall see. Under these two aspects, it is really the same; but as development takes place, it receives the different names. Together we call them the Mystery. Where the Mystery is the deepest is the gate of all that is subtle and wonderful.

## 37

道常無為而無不為。  
侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。  
化而欲作，吾將鎮之以無名之樸。  
無名之樸，夫亦將無欲。  
不欲以靜，天下將自定。

The Dao in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so there is nothing which it does not do. If princes and kings were able to maintain it, all things would of themselves be transformed by them. If this transformation became to me an object of desire, I would express the desire by the nameless simplicity.

Simplicity without a name  
Is free from all external aim.  
With no desire, at rest and still,  
All things go right as of their will.

70-71

吾言甚易知，甚易行。  
 天下莫能知，莫能行。  
 言有宗，事有君。  
 夫唯無知，是以不我知。  
 知我者希，則我者貴。  
 是以聖人被褐懷玉。  
 知不知上，不知知病。  
 夫唯病病，是以不病。  
 聖人不病，以其病病，是以不病。

My words are very easy to know, and very easy to practise; but there is no one in the world who is able to know and able to practise them. There is an originating and all-comprehending (principle) in my words, and an authoritative law for the things (which I enforce). It is because they do not know these, that men do not know me.

They who know me are few, and I am on that account (the more) to be prized. It is thus that the sage wears (a poor garb of) hair cloth, while he carries his (signet of) jade in his bosom.

[71] To know and yet (think) we do not know is the highest (attainment); not to know (and yet think) we do know is a disease. It is simply by being pained at (the thought of) having this disease that we are preserved from it. The sage has not the disease. He knows the pain that would be inseparable from it, and therefore he does not have it.

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信言不美，美言不信。  
 善者不辯，辯者不善。  
 知者不博，博者不知。  
 聖人不積，既以為人已愈有，既以與人已愈多。  
 天之道，利而不害；聖人之道，為而不爭。

Sincere words are not fine; fine words are not sincere. Those who are skilled (in the Dao) do not dispute (about it); the disputatious are not skilled in it. Those who know (the Dao) are not extensively learned; the extensively learned do not know it. The sage does not accumulate (for himself). The more that he expends for others, the more does he possess of his own; the more that he gives to others, the more does he have himself. With all the sharpness of the Way of Heaven, it injures not; with all the doing in the way of the sage he does not strive.