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BIFX 545

Daoism Assignment

4/28/2022

There are several themes and precepts that can be found throughout the Tao te Ching and the writings of Chuang Tzu. Chose at least one of these works to read. As you read through the work, find at least one passage that refers to each of the themes and precepts below:

Balance

* “Great understanding is broad and unhurried; little understanding is cramped and busy.”
* You will understand things better if you take the time to slow down and focus on the big picture.

Avoiding conflict

* “Great words are clear and limpid; little words are shrill and quarrelsome.”
* Your words will be more important if they are clear rather than divisive.

Centeredness

* “Follow the middle; go by what is constant, and you can stay in one piece, keep yourself alive, look after your parents, and live out your years.”
* Don’t rock the boat.

Empowering others

* “By being outwardly compliant, I can be a companion of men. Lifting up the tablet, kneeling, bowing, crouching down —this is the etiquette of a minister. Everybody does it, so why shouldn't I? If I do what other people do, they can hardly criticize me.”
* Cooperate and encourage others rather than try to cross them.

Energizing self

* “By being inwardly direct, I can be the companion of Heaven. Being a companion of Heaven, I know that the Son of Heaven and I are equally the sons of Heaven. Then why would I use my words to try to get men to praise me, or try to get them not to praise me?”
* You don’t need praise from others, just be honest with yourself.

Energizing self by empowering others

* “By doing my work through the examples of antiquity, I can be the companion of ancient times. Though my words may in fact be lessons and reproaches, they belong to ancient times and not to me. In this way, though I may be blunt, I cannot be blamed.”
* Rely on what has been shown to work in the past. Others may recognize the ancient references and be empowered. You will know your methods are sound.

Cosmic harmony

* “Harmonize them all with the Heavenly Equality, leave them to their endless changes, and so live out your years. What do I mean by harmonizing them with the Heavenly Equality? Right is not right; so is not so. If right were really right, it would differ so clearly from not right that there would be no need for argument. If so were really so, it would differ so clearly from not so that there would be no need for argument.”
* Right and wrong are just social constructs. Things are just going to happen one way or another because that is the way the world works so don’t spend time worrying about it.

Personal harmony

* “The way I see it, the rules of benevolence and righteousness and the paths of right and wrong are all hopelessly snarled and jumbled.”
* Just do what you are comfortable with because sorting out what everyone else thinks is right or wrong will be a mess and not lead you to a satisfying solution.

Forsaking acclaim

* “Virtue is destroyed by fame, and wisdom comes out of wrangling. Fame is something to beat people down with, and wisdom is a device for wrangling. Both are evil weapons—not the sort of thing to bring you success.”
* Become famous undermines your credibility an virtue.

Worthy achievements

* “Sweating and laboring to the end of his days and never seeing his accomplishment, utterly exhausting himself and never knowing where to look for rest—can you help pitying him? I'm not dead yet! he says, but what good is that? His body decays, his mind follows it—can you deny that this is a great sorrow?”
* Working hard without achievement is pitiful?

Ownership

* “I received life because the time had come; I will lose it because the order of things passes on. Be content with this time and dwell in this order and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you. In ancient times this was called the 'freeing of the bound.' There are those who cannot free themselves, because they are bound by things.”
* Don’t let your belongings hold you to one place.

Unseen forces

* “Day and night they change place before us and wisdom cannot spy out their source. Therefore, they should not be enough to destroy your harmony; they should not be allowed to enter the storehouse of spirit. If you can harmonize and delight in them, master them and never beat a loss for joy, if you can do this day and night without break and make it be spring with everything, mingling with all and creating the moment within your own mind—this is what I call being whole in power.”
* Instead of worry about unseen forces that make things happen, be happy with the way things are and then you will always be happy.

Recognizing fears

* “Day after day they use their minds in strife, sometimes grandiose, sometimes sly, sometimes petty. Their little fears are mean and trembly; their great fears are stunned and overwhelming … They grow dark, as though sealed with seals—such are the excesses of their old age. And when their minds draw near to death, nothing can restore them to the light.”
* Focusing too much on fears is bad?