



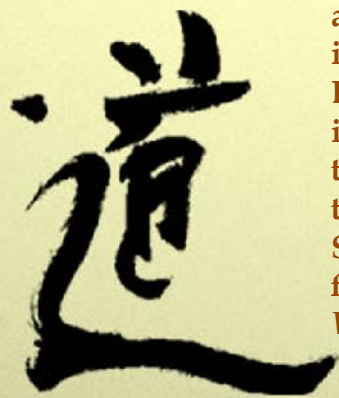
International Collaborative Leadership Institute



# THE TAO OF TRUST

## Trust According to Ancient Chinese Wisdom<sup>1</sup>

Edited by Robert Porter Lynch



In the Ancient Chinese tradition, two writers - Lao Tzu and Confucius - were eloquent in addressing the issue of trust and its importance in maintaining a healthy society. Lao Tzu wrote the *Tao Te Ching*, a short but insightful book on the inner way of being. In the Western world we would think of this as the "Way of Nature," or the "Path of the Holy Spirit." Many of his insights were developed further by Sun Tzu in *the Art of Strategy & War*.

# Tao Te Ching

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<sup>1</sup>Author's Note: 26 different translation versions of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* were consulted to reconcile what often were awkward, divergent or inconsistent phrasings when trying to modernize the language of a very ancient Oriental text written about 550 BC (approximately the time of the first prominent Greek philosophers.)

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# THE THREE TREASURES

(from Lao Tzu -- excerpts from Verse #67)

The nobility of great wisdom is in its utter simplicity and humility.  
That is the Divine Way of the Holy Spirit of Nature....

There are *Three Cherished Treasures* to hold and protect:  
The first is *Compassion*, by which one finds *Courage*.  
When a man *Cares* he is unafraid.  
The second is *Fairness*,  
By which one maintains a *Reserve of Energy* to reach widely.  
When he is fair he leaves enough for others.  
And the third is *Humility*,  
By which one finds *Influence* to assume leadership.  
When he is humble he can grow....

Those who are fearless while discarding compassion, who:  
Seek extravagance while discarding fairness,  
Lust for glory while discarding humility,  
Cannot endure -- living in fatal tension and conflict!

The compassionate warrior will be the winner,  
and if compassion is your defense you will be secure.  
Compassion is the protector of Heaven's salvation.

# THE THREE CALAMITIES

(from Lao Tzu -- excerpts from Verse #36)

There is no calamity greater than greed;  
No misery greater than a malcontent;  
No fault greater than selfishness.

# GREAT LEADERS

(from Lao Tzu – excerpts from Verse #68)

The best competitor wants his competition  
to be at their best,  
But does not make competition his goal.  
This is how to win the cooperation of others.

So it is said: he shines who rules  
by uniting with his people,  
By placing cooperation ahead of competition.

All embody the virtue of non-aggression.  
Not that they don't love to compete,  
But they do so in the spirit of play,  
Aligning the energy of people  
to be in tune with the harmony of others.

This is the ultimate principle of the ancients.

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# VIRTUES OF HUMILITY AND INNOCENCE

## – *HOLDING OF OPPOSITES* –

(from Lao Tzu -- excerpts from Verse #28)

Know the ideal of the light,  
While holding the reality of the dark.  
Be the guiding light  
By harbouring the highest standard of excellence;  
Being the highest standard,  
You become one with the primal source  
of the Divine Way of the Holy Spirit of Nature.

Know the glories of greatness,  
While holding the humility of the poor,  
Be the valley of the world through which  
all waters flow;  
Being the flowing water,  
You become the compassionate fountain for others.

The eternal virtue does not depart;  
The greater whole is undivided,  
Returning to the eternal state of simple innocence  
and child-like boundlessness.

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# EMPOWERMENT AND TRUST

(from Lao Tzu -- excerpts from Verse #17)

The greatest leaders empower others,  
acting subtly.

Thus people do not know the resources  
for their powers....

Great leaders are trusted  
because they will do what's best for all.

Next best is the leader who is loved.

Next, one who is feared.

The worst is one who is despised.

If the leader's trustworthiness is lacking,

His people will become untrustworthy.

If he has no faith in his people,

His people become unfaithful to him....

The Masterful Leader talks little,

but stimulates action.

And when the task is done, people say

"Amazing: We did it, all by ourselves!"

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Lao Tzu also had some very insightful advice about competition and warfare. The great Chinese Taoist school of thought included the classical strategist, Sun Tzu, author of the *Art of War* (also known as the *Art of Strategy*) more than two millennia ago. Sun Tzu was actually a practitioner of the earlier master, Lao Tzu.

# COMPETITIVE STRATEGY

(Lao Tzu -- excerpts from Verse #69)

Be flexible in moving ahead without advancing;  
Not charging in frontal attacks;  
Pushing back without using force;  
Decimating the enemy without engaging him.

It is worth more to yield to gain better position  
than to triumph and lose all.

In this manner one may deploy troops without marshalling them;  
Bring weapons to bear without exposing them;  
And exhaust the opponents strength without fighting them;  
Defend without hatred.

Prepare for action where there is no conflict;  
Advance against the enemy where the enemy is not.  
Look a man straight in the face and make no move;  
Open your hand and show no bared blades.

There is no greater disaster than to underestimate one's enemy.  
As long as there is a foe, value him, respect him, measure him,  
be humble toward him;

A leader becomes blinded when he severs connection  
to the Three Treasured Principles:  
– Compassion, Fairness, and Humility.

Arrogant haughtiness thus renders him unable to see the skills  
and cunning of his opponent,  
Endangering the very existence of what might remain of the three treasures,  
As he now must do battle with two enemies, one within and one outside.

When evenly matched forces oppose each other,  
The side that holds the three treasures shall win.

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# ACT WITHOUT CONTRIVANCE

(Lao Tzu -- excerpted from Verse #3)

If you overly esteem talented individuals,  
People will become overly competitive.  
If you overvalue possessions,  
People will begin to steal.

The Master leads by emptying people's minds  
of valueless desires,  
And weakening their self-serving ambitions,  
While strengthening their commitment  
to work together;

Preferring simplicity and freedom from desires,  
Avoiding the pitfalls of erroneous knowledge  
and wrong action.

Not by doing it himself,  
But by delegating and empowering others  
to act wisely,  
By letting the people have no cunning  
and no greed,  
So that those who dare to scheme will not dare  
to meddle.

Act without contrivance,  
And nothing will be beyond control.

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# THE MASTERFUL TEACHER

(Lao Tzu -- from Verse #23)

The caring traveler leaves nothing to despoil the land.  
The wise speaker does not find fault and endless blame.  
The accurate accountant leaves no working to be completed;  
The perfect container needs no lock to remain closed;  
The elegant knot leaves no end to become entangled.

Thus the Master is willing to elevate everyone,  
And doesn't know the meaning of rejecting anyone.  
She is there to help all of creation, so that no one is forsaken.  
She doesn't abandon even the smallest creature,  
Nor overlook the slightest detail,  
Nor reject the paradox and contradiction.  
She is always there to see to things exactly so that nothing is lost.  
This is called the insight of following and embracing  
Nature's inner light.

For the wise, who understand the good, must guide the weak;  
Never turning away those who seek.  
The wise use the bad as raw material for learning;  
And so the imperfect is the tool of the perfect man.

Those who neither value the sage,  
Nor care for her lesson are greatly deluded,  
Though they may think of themselves as learned.  
If the sage does not honor and respect those who wish to learn,  
Confusion will result;  
You will become deluded no matter how smart you are.  
This is the essence of wonder and the secret of prime importance.



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Confucius (~ 500 BC) was also quite clear about the role of trust. Confucianism, emphasized personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice and sincerity.

## TRUSTED LEADERSHIP

People never recognize a leader who has no trust.

## WIN-WIN AGREEMENTS

Unless you make a contract based on mutual trust and social justice, it will never be carried out smoothly.

## POLITICAL PRIORITIES

When asked what his politics were, Confucius replied:

It is to provide people food, protect people with armaments, and gain trust from people.

When asked further “Which should we abandon first if our country is forced to abandon food, weapons, or trust?” Confucius stated:

**Abandon weapons first, then food.**

**But never abandon trust.**

**Trust is more important than life.**

**More people can be born, .....**

**but trust is never regained.**