

C&T Notes: November 18, 2009

“Acting without Action”: Lao-zi and the *Dao De Jing*

General Discussion Notes:

- The Dao has many characteristics of God (omnipresent); unlike Hebrew God, Dao does not directly interact with people (no voice)
- The way of the Dao can only be understood through introspection; idea can be taught, but not necessarily understood
- The Dao ideal is to bring about harmony among everything; however, does this harmony allow for sustenance/innovation?
- PROBLEM: when individual or group of individuals refuses to “pull their own weight.” Lack of motivation due to no personal success generally results in less productivity.

Important Passages/Themes:

Section 4: The Dao is empty like a bowl

Section 11: The idea of being & nonbeing/balance of the two

Section 15: “I can only describe them arbitrarily.” Suggests vagueness; realistic truth is difficult to find; leaves most of it up to self-interpretation; perhaps he cannot explain entire truth because he doesn’t quite understand it himself???

Sections 17 & 32: Challenges “rule”; Daoism has laissez-faire/go-with-the-flow attitude vs. legalism’s “the law is the law” idea

Section 25: Four great things (including the king), who/what models after whom/what?

Section 34: How do you attain greatness? Suggests one cannot strive to be great; rather one must be innately great

Section 48: The pursuit; less and less pursuing results in non-action (which is good)

Section 56: Profound Identification, “Become one with the dusty world.”

Section 65: knowledge and leadership: People are difficult to govern because they have too much knowledge; suggesting that “ignorance is bliss”; how can a king with knowledge teach his subjects to remain ignorant? Similar to Socrates idea that the more you know, the

more you realize you do not know. IDEA: Good ruler understands the way of the Dao, therefore has knowledge, and passes the way of the Dao to the people.

Section 68 (theme): A good leader will rule from below (his people)

Section 76: "The strong and the great are inferior, while the tender and the weak are superior." Idea that weak and tender are associated with life.

Section 81: The truth is not beautiful; if it is beautiful, then it is not true