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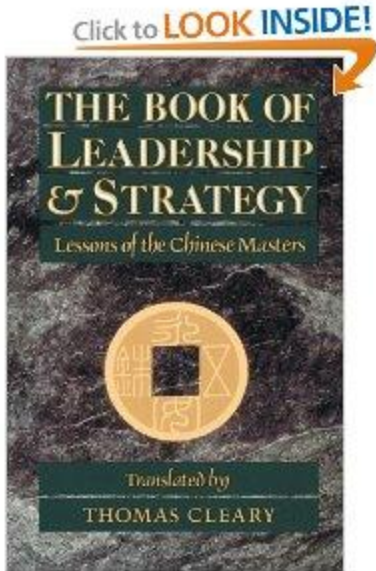
October 14, 2011

Timeless Lessons on Leadership and Strategy

Based on the wisdom of the ancient Chinese Masters

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The Book of Leadership & Strategy



Note: this presentation references materials provided in *The Book of Leadership and Strategy, Lessons of the Chinese Masters* translated by Thomas Cleary.

Four Sections

- On State and Society
- On Warfare
- On Peace
- On Wisdom

Three Themes

- **The Way**
- **Formlessness**
- **Wisdom**

To find *The Way* leave the road



What is “The Way”?

A way that can be spoken of is not an eternal way; a name that can be named is not a permanent name. What can be written down or passed on to others is the dregs.

How does one learn of “The Way”?

To recite the books of ancient kings is not as good as hearing their words. Hearing their words is not as good as attaining that whereby those words were spoken. To attain that whereby those words were spoken is something that words cannot say. Therefore, “a way that can be spoken is not the eternal Way.”

How does one find “The Way”?

The wise leave the road and find the Way; fools cling to the Way and lose the road.

How does one follow “The Way”?

What sages follow is called the Way, and what they do is called their work. The Way is like metal and stone, unchanging; their work is like a musical instrument, which must be tuned each time.

Right and wrong are situational. In the appropriate situation, nothing is wrong. Without the appropriate situation, nothing is right. What is right in one case is not what is right in another; what is wrong in one case is not what is wrong in another.

To follow *The Way* follow *Tao*

*Honors can be bought with fine words,
respect can be won with good deeds;
but the Tao is beyond all value,
and no one can achieve it.*

*Thus, when a new leader is chosen,
don't offer to help him
with your wealth or your expertise.
Offer instead
to teach him about the Tao.*

(Chapter 62 of *Tao Te Ching*¹)

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1. Zhengkun, Gu (translator) (1995).
Lao Zi: The Book of Tao and Teh. Beijing:
Peking University Press.



What is Tao?

The word Tao in Chinese means “The Way” – the Way of Life, the Way of the Universe, the way things are. The concept of Tao is very illusory and difficult to grasp, yet very real at the same time.

An ancient classic said, “The Tao is the law of nature, which your true self can’t depart from even for one instant. If you could depart from it, it wouldn’t be the Tao”.

A modern scholar further explains this idea “You can’t see it, but you can see its effects, the way physicists can trace the path of a sub-atomic particle through a cloud chamber”.

The Tao essentially reflects the basic laws and principles of the Universe and the pulse of all that exist.

To lead *The Way* think differently



Using the measures and regulations of one generation or one age to govern the world is like the case of a traveler in a boat who drops his sword in the middle of the river and notches the edge of the boat to mark the spot where the sword fell; then he goes back to the riverbank that evening to look for the sword below the notch on the boat. He is far from knowing what is what.

Governing on *The Way*



The perceptions of eye and ear are not sufficient to distinguish the inner design of things; intellectual discourse is not sufficient to determine right and wrong. Those who use their wits to govern have a hard time maintaining a nation; only those who realize universal harmony and keep to spontaneous response can do it.

Those who reign by attainment of the Way may have no skills themselves, but they can indeed employ the skilled. If you do not attain the Way, even if you have many skills they are useless.

Even wise leaders must await appropriate circumstances. Appropriate circumstances can only be found at the right time and cannot be fulfilled through being sought by knowledge.

The way of leadership is not for doing but for not doing. What does non-doing mean? It means that the intelligent do not act on rank, the benevolent do not give based on rank, and the brave are not violent because of rank. These can be called non-doing.

Find the source of destiny, master the mentality, bring to reason liking and disliking, adjust feelings and temperament appropriately, and the Way of government is attained.

Achieving *Formlessness*



What is valued in the Way is its formlessness. Be formless, and you cannot be repressed or oppressed; you cannot be measured or figured out.

Anything that has form can be overcome; anything that takes shape can be countered. This is why sages conceal their forms in nothingness and let their minds soar in the void.



All creatures are susceptible to control because of their movements, so sages value stillness. If you are still, you can counter excitement; and if you hold back, you can counter initiatives.



Benevolence, courage, trust, and integrity are fine human qualities, but it is possible to plunder the benevolent, to incite the courageous, to deceive the trusting, and to intrigue against those with integrity. If group leaders have any of these qualities visible, they are captured by other people. Only the formless are invulnerable. Sages hide in inscrutability, so their feelings cannot be observed. They operate in formlessness, so their lines cannot be crossed.



When opponents go into action before you do, then you see their form. When they are excited but you are calm, then you neutralize their strength. Meet the excited with calm; await the disturbed with control. Be formless, so as to master the formal; respond to change without contrivance. Then, even if you are unable to attain victory over opponents, opponents will have no way to attain victory over you.

Cultivating *Wisdom*



In human nature, nothing is more valuable than benevolence; nothing is more urgent than wisdom. Benevolence is the sustenance; wisdom is the means to put it into practice.

It may be impossible to plan ahead for some events, and it may be impossible to think ahead about some things. They come up suddenly, without warning, so sages develop the Way and wait for the right time.

Sages conserve what they already have and do not seek what they haven't attained. If you seek what don't have, what you do have will be lost. If you cultivate what you already have, then what you want comes about. Therefore, in military operations you first become invincible and then wait for vulnerability in opponents. In government you first become secure and then wait for insecurity in opponents.

Great people are serene, free from longing; they are calm, free from worry. Outwardly go along with the flow, while inwardly keeping your true nature. Then your eyes and ears will not be dazzled, and our thoughts will not be confused, while the spirit within you will expand greatly to roam in the realm of absolute purity.

The Tao cannot be sought from others; it is attained in oneself. If you abandon yourself to seek from others, you are far from the Tao.

On Human Nature



When you truly understand human nature and destiny, kindness and justice are naturally included. Ups and downs cannot disturb your mind.

If you want to know the way of the sky, observe seasonal cycles. If you want to know the way of the earth, find out what kind of trees grow there. If you want to know the way of people, let them have what they want.

If you focus on people's shortcomings and forget about their strengths, then it will be hard to find worthy people in all the world.

Let individuals suit their natures, be secure in their abodes, live as best they can, and exercise their capabilities. In this way even the ignorant will be found to have strong points, and even the intelligent will be found to have weaknesses.

Clarity does not mean seeing others, just seeing oneself. Acuity does not mean hearing others, just hearing oneself. Understanding does not mean knowing others, just knowing oneself.

An ancient sage king warned, "Be careful of each day that goes by, with the greatest possible caution. No one stumbles over a mountain, but people do trip over anthills." So, the fact that people generally slight small problems and subtle matters is the very reason they have so many regrets.