

Introduction to the Tao

What is the Tao (Dao) and where did it come from?

Tao = way, Te = power, Ching = book. The book of the way and it's power.

“While the word itself literally translates as 'way', 'path', or 'route', or sometimes more loosely as 'doctrine' or 'principle', it is generally used to signify the primordial essence or fundamental aspect of the universe. “ - Wikipedia

“In all its uses, Dao is considered to have ineffable qualities that prevent it from being defined or expressed in words. It can, however, be *known* or *experienced*, and its principles can be followed or practiced. Much of East Asian philosophical writing focuses on the value of adhering to the principles of Dao and the various consequences of failing to do so.” - Wikipedia

“Dao is intrinsically related to the concepts [yin and yang](#) (Pinyin: [yīnyáng](#)), where every action creates counter-actions as unavoidable movements within manifestations of the Dao, and proper practice variously involves accepting, conforming to, or working with these natural developments.” - Wikipedia

The Tao is attributed to Lao Tzu, who lived (according to tradition) in the 6th century B.C.E. *Lao* means "venerable" or "old". *Zi*, or *tzu*, means "master". (Wikipedia) No one is certain whether or not Lao Tzu was one person or an amalgamation of multiple historical teachers. The greatest legend about Lao Tzu is that he wrote the Tao Te Ching on behest of a border guard as he was leaving the kingdom. The guard requested that he write down all of his wisdom. There is still much uncertainty regarding the life of Lao Tzu.

Many Different Translations

40. BEING AND NOT BEING

The motion of nature
is cyclic and returning.
Its way is to yield,
for to yield is to become.
All things are born of being;
being is born of non-being. - Stan Rosenthal translation, available online

40. The movement of the Tao consists in
Returning.
The use of the Tao consists in softness.
All things under heaven are born of the
corporeal:
The corporeal is born of the Incorporeal. - John C.H.Wu translation

40. The movement of Tao is to return
The way of Tao is to yield

Heaven, Earth, and all things
are born of the existent world
The existent world is born of the nothingness of Tao - Jonathan Star translation

Top 5 Longest and Shortest Verses.

Longest 2,38,4,3,1.....18,68,71,44,40 Shortest

Short

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44. SUFFICIENCY

A contented man knows himself to be
more precious even than fame,
and so, obscure, remains.
He who is more attached to wealth
than to himself,
suffers more heavily from loss.
He who knows when to stop, might lose,
but in safety stays.

71. WITHOUT SICKNESS

To acknowledge one's ignorance
shows strength of personality,
but to ignore wisdom is a sign of weakness.
To be sick of sickness is a sign of good health,
therefore the wise man grows sick of sickness,
and sick of being sick of sickness,
'til he is sick no more.

Long

2. LETTING GO OF COMPARISONS

We cannot know the Tao itself, ← *It is not a "thing" or process*
nor see its qualities direct,
but only see by differentiation,
that which it manifests. ← *But it creates results*
Thus, that which is seen as beautiful
is beautiful compared with that
which is seen as lacking beauty;
an action considered skilled
is so considered in comparison
with another, which seems unskilled.
That which a person knows he has
is known to him by that which he does not have,
and that which he considers difficult
seems so because of that which he can do with ease.
One thing seems long by comparison with that
which is, comparatively, short.
One thing is high because another thing is low;
only when sound ceases is quietness known,
and that which leads

is seen to lead only by being followed. ← *Yin Yang opposites!*
 In comparison, the sage,
 in harmony with the Tao,
 needs no comparisons, ← *Letting go of comparisons*
 and when he makes them, knows
 that comparisons are judgements,
 and just as relative to he who makes them, ← *Judgments are not absolutes, but relative.*
 and to the situation,
 as they are to that on which
 the judgement has been made.
 Through his experience,
 the sage becomes aware that all things change,
 and that he who seems to lead,
 might also, in another situation, follow.
 So he does nothing; he neither leads nor follows.
 That which he does is neither big nor small;
 without intent, it is neither difficult,
 nor done with ease.
 His task completed, he then lets go of it;
 seeking no credit, he cannot be discredited.
 Thus, his teaching lasts for ever,
 and he is held in high esteem.

1. THE EMBODIMENT OF TAO

Even the finest teaching is not the Tao itself. ← *"Written Tao/teaching = Map, True Path = Territory"*
 Even the finest name is insufficient to define it.
 Without words, the Tao can be experienced, ← *"The REAL Tao cannot be described in words
 It is experienced"*
 and without a name, it can be known.
 To conduct one's life according to the Tao,
 is to conduct one's life without regrets;
 to realize that potential within oneself
 which is of benefit to all. ← *"Benefiting all = win/win, not ambitiously taking and ending up
 taking away from others"*
 Though words or names are not required
 to live one's life this way,
 to describe it, words and names are used,
 that we might better clarify
 the way of which we speak,
 without confusing it with other ways
 in which an individual might choose to live.
 Through knowledge, intellectual thought and words, ← *Map*
 the manifestations of the Tao are known,
 but without such intellectual intent
 we might experience the Tao itself. ← *Territory*
 Both knowledge and experience are real,
 but reality has many forms,
 which seem to cause complexity.
 By using the means appropriate,
 we extend ourselves beyond
 the barriers of such complexity,
 and so experience the Tao. <--- *The Tao lies "beyond" the common reality.*

Beyond the common reality is like going somewhere without knowing the street names. As a sage you have practiced it so much that it is like driving a familiar route. It becomes effortless, you don't have to read every street sign and pay attention for the exits. This is being in the flow. This cannot be taught directly, it only can be taught in a form comprehensible to others. Such as using a map or some kind of instructions. The other person will get to where they are going but they are not going to have the same experience as another until they get into their own flow.

As a map captures the bare architecture of a territory so do words only provide a scaffolding from which to build the true following of the path for the individual.

A map of Tao is the written Tao that you can see in the book and hold in your hands and learn from. The territory is life and the path that you are on. The “real” Tao is not in any book, the book is just the best way that we know of to be able to pass down these nuggets of wisdom through the ages.

It is an interesting concept, how the world of ideas/forms connects with physical reality. To steal from science, where does theoretical and experimental touch or overlap? It almost seems like imagination is related to the point which the transfer occurs. The place where logic, theory, mathematical proofs touch the reality which can be sensual, data, experiment, observed. A place that muddies the waters between observed and observer. Thoughts make things happen. This is much like the Tao, it is like the “thought” of the universe making things happen through the universes “imagination”.

Who is your Compass?

Is a teacher or Guru your GPS? NO

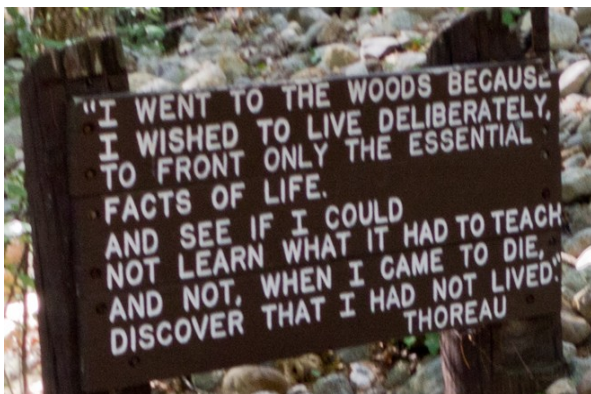
You have to develop your own internal compass to navigate your path in the territory of life. Peoples, towns, counties, states, nations are all on individual paths, collectively interacting.

Correlating where you are in life and reckoning your position, with help. Teachers, Gurus, books, seminars and etc. can help you to learn how to read the map and may help you to help yourself find where you are on it. But no one but you is with you every step of the way on your personal path. This is where the true Tao lies, developing your own internal compass.

Find some people as models in life and learn about them.

Gahndi – Hindu but had many Taoist qualities about him. Non-violent resistance, the salt march. Helped the oppressed Indians gain independence from one of the worlds most powerful military forces without a full scale war.

Thoreau – Thoreau's philosophy of [civil disobedience](#) influenced the political thoughts and actions of such later figures as [Leo Tolstoy](#), [Mahatma Gandhi](#), (Gahndi read Thoreau's *Walden* in 1906 while still in South Africa.) Supreme Court Justice [William O. Douglas](#), President [John F. Kennedy](#), and [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) (read *Civil Disobedience* in 1944 while at Morehead College) all spoke of being strongly affected by Thoreau's work, particularly *Civil Disobedience*. -Wikipedia



Speaking about the fact that thieving or robbery would be unknown if all lived as simple as he did. He goes on to quote Homer, *Walden* p156 - " You who govern public affairs, what need have you to employ punishments? Love virtue, and the people will be virtuous. The virtues of a superior man are like the wind; the virtues of a common man are like the grass; the grass, when the wind passes over it bends." 4

"Most of the luxuries and many of the so-called comforts of life are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind."

Walden p71 Cypress Story, p100-101,p156,p153-55. The entire chapter Solitude in Walden.

Stuart Wilde

- Let your feelings make more decisions for you. There is no point in intellectualizing and fretting decisions by running a mental simulation over and over in your mind to make a decision.
- Accept what is happening. When it is raining, do rain. Put yourself in situations that you normally would not in order to prove to yourself that it is indeed safe.
- Things, people, places, events are all fleeting. Enjoy life and all the things, people, places and events in the present moment.
- Simplify. Happiness comes from an internal source. More stuff is more to keep track of, worry about losing, cleaning, polishing, disposing of and etc.

Wayne Dyer

"One who lives according to the Tao knows that ego is a false master, drawing people away from knowing their true nature."

"It's spirit that gives life. To truly live out your destiny as a piece of originating Tao, you must shed your ego and return to spirit"

"What's real never changes because it has no form. So the more you can let things unfold naturally, the more harmoniously you're living the Tao"

"Be with the world, in it and adoring it, but not needing to possess it. This is the way of peace. This is the way of the Tao"

"Focus on understanding yourself. By taking responsibility for how you choose to respond to anything or anyone, you're aligning yourself with the Tao."

Empty your Cup!

The Tao is less about learning and a lot more about unlearning. Our cups, which can be our life and our minds are already full of stuff. In order to let in something that is new and different, and we mean different in *kind*, you have to make some space. Empty your mind of preconceived notions, use "beginners mind", make some space in your life by setting aside time for yourself to be in practice. As you do this you will be able to attune yourself and eventually learn how to bring your practice to the world when life presents its challenges.

A suggestion is to begin with non-judgemental observation. Observe something, really observe it, a flower, people walking in the street, a sunset. Observe it as if you are a person coming from another planet, like it is a totally new experience. Try to quiet the mind of any characterizations. Remember the judgmental characterizations such as, long/short, big/small, new/old...etc.

Let go of knowing. You don't have to know why all of the time. With some situations in life and in the world around us, "it is what it is". No sense being frustrated about things beyond your scope.

Yin Yang v. 2,22,28,29,37

Taijitu "Diagram of ultimate power"



Most everything has a polarity, electricity, magnetism (ignoring magnetic monopole theory!), dark/light. They are not judgmental opposites, long and short seem like opposites, but they are based on opinions for the most part. Where as a battery is plus and minus, no opinions about it.

It has worked its way into Chinese medicine and food theory. Hot/cold, moist/dry. You can see the Yin and Yang among people too, think introvert/extrovert. But most of the time there is a little bit of the opposite in the each other. Just as no one is totally introverted or extroverted. Everyone

has some moments when they behave the opposite. It is like the symbol for the Tao. There is a little "eye" of the opposite color in the black or white "fish". Even people that we consider "evil" have a little speck of good in them. This is the spot that we have to start with to open up a dialogue.

Yin-Yang in life is like a program held in New England in the Summer that brings Israeli and Arab teens together. They start thinking that they have almost nothing in common and find out that most of what they have in common is the same that all people have in common. It is all about finding what people perceive as the small part that they have in common to open up to the greater portions that they have in common in reality.

22. YIELDING TO MAINTAIN INTEGRITY

Yield, and maintain integrity.

To bend is to be upright;

to be empty is to be full.

Those who have little have much to gain,

but those who have much

may be confused by possessions.

The wise man embraces the all encompassing;

he is unaware of himself, and so has brilliance;

not defending himself, he gains distinction;

not seeking fame, he receives recognition;

not making false claims, he does not falter;

and not being quarrelsome,

is in conflict with no one.

This is why it was said by the sages of old,

"Yield, and maintain integrity;

be whole, and all things come to you".

Wind, Water, Soft overcoming hard



"When the wind blows what happens to the trees? what happens to the grass?"

"What happens when it blows with more force?"

" You fight the force of the world with force, eventually you will fall."

"The wind can teach you more things than all of the words that I could possibly line up for you."

"Breathe in. Breathe in and feel the air as wind."

"Living is a gift from the planet, don't take more than you really need. The Sun can provide all of the energy we really ever need."

"Water will go and clean places that man is loathe to go. " - author unknown

Rock,paper,scissors, *water*. Water will beat all the others eventually.

43. AT ONE WITH TAO

Only the soft overcomes the hard,
by yielding, bringing it to peace.

Even where there is no space,

that which has no substance enters in. ← *Fill a glass with rock, sand and water will still fit!*

Through these things is shown
the value of the natural way.

The wise man understands full well,

that wordless teaching can take place, ← *Wordless, not all learning is intellectual.*

and that actions should occur

without the wish for self-advancement. ← *Not having a what's in it for me outlook opens you up.*

33. WITHOUT FORCE: WITHOUT PERISHING

Knowledge frequently results

from knowing others, ← *Knowing others, such as emulating and learning from a guru.*

but the man who is awakened,

has seen the uncarved block. ← *Uncarved printing block which may be made to hold any information.*

Others might be mastered by force, ← *Micromangement, training versus learning.*

but to master one's self
requires the Tao.

He who has many material things, ← *Material possessions do not equate to fulfillment.*

may be described as rich,

but he who knows he has enough,

and is at one with the Tao,

might have enough of material things,

and have self-being as well.

Will-power may bring perseverance; ← *Will-power = force, pushing against, forcing of the will.*

but to have tranquility is to endure,

being protected for all his days.

He whose ideas remain in the world,

is present for all time.

← *Being in the present moment.*



Wu-Wei: Water Course Way

"Don't tense up you cannot defeat the enemy that way."

"The flow is more important than power."

"You have to be like the water..."

"I'm not tensing up anywhere...I'm just using your excessive force. I am in control the flow of power."

"And to do that I have to relax the whole body to be able to react to any movement. ...I become like water."

"Water can take any form. It can flow along slowly or beat down aggressively, right?"

Non-action as in effortless mastery not pushing against the environment or nature. Think of things that appear idle but are still needed. Most cars have an idler pulley, it doesn't run the a/c or the steering or the fan or anything. But without it you couldn't even put the belt on and the belt wouldn't be kept to the proper tension. So even though it spends >99% of it's life doing nothing, it is still needed.



11. THE UTILITY OF NON-EXISTENCE

Though thirty spokes may form the wheel,
it is the hole within the hub ← *The hole is nothing but it makes the wheel work.*

which gives the wheel utility.

It is not the clay the potter throws,
which gives the pot its usefulness,
but the space within the shape,
from which the pot is made.

Without a door, the room cannot be entered,
and without windows it is dark.

Such is the utility of non-existence.

29. TAKING NO ACTION ← *This one is Yin-Yang also.*

The external world is fragile,
and he who meddles with its natural way, ← *Leave things alone, don't force action.*
risks causing damage to himself.

He who tries to grasp it, ← *Don't possess. Possess, latin:possesus, "to sit upon"*
thereby loses it.

It is natural for things to change,
sometimes being ahead, sometimes behind. ← *Patience, it is not always going to be the same pace.*

There are times when even breathing
may be difficult,

whereas its natural state is easy.

Sometimes one is strong, ← *Notice the Yin-Yang opposites of these.*

and sometimes weak,

sometimes healthy,

and sometimes sick,

sometimes is first,

and at other times behind.

The sage does not try

to change the world by force,

for he knows that force results in force.

He avoids extremes and excesses,

and does not become complacent.