

DAO DE JING
GATEWAY INTO NATURE

Aviilokín K'shi

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*To Master Ananda Ch'ki
Martyr*

Titles by Aviilokín K'shi

Lions of Virtue: The Warrior and the Child
Daughter of Xiu

Dao De Jing: Gateway into Nature

Dao De Jing lives up to its claim of taking the reader on a journey beyond the realm of what we believe to be the truth. The commentaries are extremely helpful for clarity and understanding.

Readers Favorite 5-star review (by Natalie Soine)

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Introduction

While I was in China, ever wandering in solitude as I do, I beheld from the corner of my eyes that I was being watched by a Taoist master. Her face took on that to me very recognizable expression, of when a mystic uses his or her spiritual capacities to use the ethereal plane to read the quality of things. At length she approached me, and told me I have been a Taoist in previous lifetimes. This was to me an echo of validation; being born somewhat spiritually gifted I am at times able to remember my previous lifetimes, and can reintegrate some of my former mystical cultivation. She had wanted me to join the Taoist path that she walked, which is the *Quanzhen* form of Taoism, often compared to Buddhism in terms of practice and monastic structure. But I declined, for in my soul there lives a very different Tao, a Tao I humbly confess I deem forgotten and lost to the contemporary world, including China. This was a Tao free of religious structure but at full one with the movements of nature, which I respectfully feel is a thing religion is ever too quickly inclined to disrupt. For indeed this is what defines ancient (*classical*) Taoism, an ancient form of Chinese mysticism that pursues a mystical unity between mankind and nature, that would often go hand in hand with esoteric warriorhood. In a mystical dream I was approached by a Taoist master from a spiritual realm, and was asked if I wanted to talk to the West about the form of Tao cultivation that still exists within me. Though I had vowed to devote my life to the welfare of others, my first reaction was to decline, for I have received much persecution for my transcendental stillness and humble mystical giftedness, both from contemporary Taoists (and Buddhists) and (spiritual) Westerners alike, to an extent that I felt it was no-longer of any use to share the harmony of Tao with this world. Eventually I agreed, feeling it is my natural duty to transmit this path of natural harmony. I do not do this by assuming the attitude of some enlightened master, but that of a humble storyteller. I like to express the Taoist mystical state of being in poetically written stories, such as *Lions of Virtue* and *Daughter of Xiu*. But this time I would try my humble hand at translating *Dao De Jing*, a foremost classic in the Taoist canon, traditionally attributed to the Chinese sage *Lao Zi* (also spelled Lao-tzu; 604–531 BCE), whom is believed to have been a record keeper and librarian in the court of the Zhou Dynasty (also called the Chou Dynasty, c. 1100–256 BCE). This was a time plagued by war and moral decline; it is said that this was an incentive for Lao Zi to resign his post and leave the mayhem of his age behind him. Beginning his journey as an endless wanderer, as he was about to leave the city, the gatekeeper recognized him, and asked him to leave a few words of wisdom before he would part down his road. These few words of wisdom came to be *Dao De Jing*, a text that looks back at wisdom that was already very ancient even in that time, and is mostly directed at the rulers of that time on how to govern the realm in accordance with the natural harmony of Tao, though we may easily apply this wisdom to govern our own lives as well. Scholars find the topic of Lao Zi very debatable, and doubt he has even ever existed, asserting it is likely that *Dao De Jing* was written by several authors over time. However, as you will see, we are about to start upon a journey beyond the realm of scholars and academical debate, for a Taoist journey is a journey founded upon the virtue of *not-knowing*, a virtue by which the world is understood through the eyes of transcendental clarity — a clarity based upon a state of mystical “emptiness” and stillness. To a Taoist soul, such scholarly issues are but factoids that can but hinder your mystical realization of reality. Chapter twenty begins with: *One must cease to concern oneself with intellectual rigidity, for through learning, one does not attain the Unknowable realm of Tao*, a notion that you will find echoed through-out the entirety of the text.

It was difficult for my Taoist soul to write the above few words about myself. I am vowed to modesty, but I realized that as a spiritual author, the nature of my books would not make sense to the public if I

could not clarify that my understanding of Tao originates from a humble inborn mystical sensitivity. I needed to correlate the highly suggestive Chinese language with my humble mystical experiences; this is of course not the same as translating the text from-out a scholarly perspective. In this clarification I allowed myself to be guided by the following three lines of chapter twenty-four:

*One who boasts shall not last,
but to cut oneself down completely,
that too does not lead to accomplishment.*

I have chosen to add commentaries to some of the verses, but not all. This is because the verses often portray the same principles but applied within slightly different context. Verses without commentary are therefore deemed explained by other commentaries. For those looking to practically actualize the mystical union with nature about which *Dao De Jing* speaks, please refer your browser to www.aviiokinkshi.net, and look for the upcoming videos under the *media* section.

About This Translation

The Chinese language is inherently suggestive and what one may call ambiguous. It is like a river with many turns that can never become absolutely concrete in its direction, yet those who learn to surrender to its flow are taken on a journey full of meaning. A Chinese word has many simultaneous meanings. Though the English language is more precise, it too has words that have multiple, diverging meanings. For instance, the word *deep*. It can mean a certain altitude below a given surface area, it may mean *profundity*, it may also imply a certain intensity of mood. Let's take the following English sentence as an example: *John's heart is not well*. This may either mean John has a medical condition with his heart; it may also mean he is not feeling happy. Every Chinese word, phrase and sentence fundamentally has this quality. We may say that English is precise and intellectual, whereas Chinese is suggestive and intuitive. This typically allowed Chinese mystics to write on several levels at the same time, making their communications multidimensional. For this reason I like to compare their words to a seed; when planted in the soils of ever growing mystical experience, their meaning sprouts and unfolds like a tree with many branches and leaves. If one's mystical cultivation is still young, however, one's apprehension of these texts can be compared to a nascent sapling with only few branches and leaves. Due to the nature of the Chinese language, and indeed the nature of Taoist mysticism itself, the ancient sages did not necessarily write with intellectual precision as if drawing a roadmap with words. Rather their language was suggestive and inherently poetic, hinting unto that river down which they journeyed; a river that is certainly, concretely there, and yet its way is indistinct and diverse. It may be said that in this way the Chinese mystic sensitizes you to the cosmic currents of Tao. They did not seek to create an intellectual model in your head, which is something that our Western mindset fundamentally seeks from an explanatory text, but rather guided their readers' minds towards the intuitive experience of Tao. Ironically enough, this is perhaps as concrete language can ever get when it comes down to expressing the meaning of life. An English text would seek to explain things in intellectual concepts, a Chinese Taoist text seeks to induce intuitive experience. Not wishing to invalidate the work of others, academical translations of *Dao De Jing* that try to present the text as a literal, word for word transition to the English language never conveyed much mystical meaning to me. A one on one translation does not work, because English words are not as pregnant in meaning as their Chinese counterparts. English words cannot fulfil the same *seed function* as Chinese words. I therefore found it important not to put words to the *seeds* but to the branches and the leaves, which means I give meaning to what these seeds suggestively imply. In this I allowed myself to be guided by my humble mystical experience. Due to my inherently different approach, the erudite members of the Taoist community advised me that in our Western culture of rigid classification, it is important that I clarify that my version of *Dao De Jing* is not based upon trying to produce a literal translation, for indeed it seems to me that such a thing is a fallacy. Instead, I should classify my version of the text as an *English interpretation*, based on mystical experience; I do keep as close to the original wording as much as possible.

The Transcendental Fabric

CHAPTER ONE

The Tao conceived in ideas is not the Tao of eternity.
To name it is to not hear its truthful name.
In its namelessness it gave rise to both heaven and earth.
That which can be named looks to it as its mother.
In order to penetrate its mystery, we must be without desire.
And yet through desire we observe its manifestation.
These two give rise to each other and are in truth the same.
Joined together is to understand the mystery.
This unity is the subtle passageway.

COMMENTARY

Taoism is a path that did not only perceive the Tao as the divine source of life, but especially as a passageway into nature.

In order to understand this, we must see that the Tao is not only the source of life but naturally also the universal essence of all things. Because the Tao is the universal essence of all things, it has a *bridging function* between all things, as if it enables a neural network to exist between the myriad facets of life. Therefore those who learn to live in compliance with Tao learn to interface with reality, and so become wise and harmonious.

I also like to refer to this quality as *transcendental empathy*.

The meaning of *empathy* is that one is able to understand another person by being able to place oneself in his or her position. By living in compliance with Tao, one places oneself in the universal essence of all things, thereby attaining an *empathic relationship* with the truths of life, including the laws and principles of nature. This is the origin of esoteric wisdom such as yoga, qi gong, inner alchemy, the mystical martial arts, and tantra. I believe transcendental empathy also holds the key as how to advance into a technological civilization that destroys neither itself nor its environment.

To explain transcendental empathy further, imagine three empty bowls. All three bowls contain the same "emptiness", the same *transcendental essence*. Let us say that one of these bowls is you. The second bowl is ordinary, daily things, such as rivers, mountains, trees and other lifeforms. The third bowl stands for more abstract things, such as the laws of nature. When one bowl makes contact with its own emptiness, it simultaneously connects with the emptiness of the other two bowls, because their emptiness is actually the same. Because of this, the bowl that realizes its emptiness attains a very strong empathic bond with the other two bowls, and comes to understand them very deeply. It becomes very deeply attuned with them for that it actively shares in their common, universal nature. This is what I would deem the essence of Tao cultivation. In the light of this, let's examine this verse.

*The Tao conceived in ideas is not the Tao of eternity.
To name it is to not hear its truthful name.*

Zen Buddhism has a saying: *when you see the Buddha on the road, kill him*. The transcendental realm of Tao is the realm of the Uncreated. This means that in the realm of Tao ideas and conceptualization do not exist. Therefore, the moment you develop some type of idea about the Tao (or the Buddha nature), your mind is no-longer capable of attuning itself with its transcendental, Uncreated principle. This is what is meant with the first two lines.

That which can be named looks to it as its mother.

The awareness of most people has not yet returned to the Uncreated realm of Tao. People's awareness lives only in the Created facet of existence. In this facet, we experience the myriad things of life; these things can be *named*. The fourth line says: *that which can be named looks to it as its mother*. This means Taoist wisdom recognizes the Tao as the source of life, the origin of the myriad things of existence.

In order to penetrate its mystery, we must be without desire.

When the mind is restless, the energy is depleted and scattered; a tumultuous mind gives a certain restless and disharmonious quality to our energy, so that we cannot resonate with what is truly meaningful. We are not able to connect with Tao or natural law. The energy is also not stable enough to form connections. How is the mind brought into stillness? How can it become serene? How is the energy stabilized? Though mindfulness and meditation are helpful, this can only ever be truly accomplished through non-desire; when we are simply content we are not restless. Also, in the Tao desire does not exist, nor is there anything to be desired. Therefore to assume the attitude of non-desire is to attain compliance with its Uncreated principle.

And yet through desire we observe its manifestation.

This verse does not completely invalidate desire. This is because when we learn to make contact with Tao, we understand what is *worthy* of being desired. As described above, attaining the realm of Tao enables the quality of *transcendental empathy*, whereby we connect with the laws of nature. It is this that can give us meaningful direction in life.

What are these natural laws? To a Taoist, the word *nature* does not simply mean the outdoors, flora and vegetation, or wildlife. Like a scientist, to a Taoist *nature* simply means *existence* in the most complete and holistic sense, with all its dimensions, universes, forces, substances, lifeforms and the laws that organize them into a coherent whole.

The natural laws that would likely most interest the spiritual person are those that lead to a positive self-transformation. Such laws are for instance compassion, mindfulness, patience, detachment, dietary wisdom, meditation, or yoga. These are the virtues of character and behaviour and the principles of life. I refer to these as *laws*, for by the principle of *cause and effect* they shall inevitably lead to certain results for those who integrate them in their self-conduct. For instance, should one pursue the virtue of compassion, then this will inevitably lead to a greater inner peace and a consequential greater clarity.

This is true for every person upon this world, no matter his ethnicity or religious background. Because of this absolute certainty, it is a law of nature. When you stretch forward in yoga, this will naturally open a certain energy channel in your back. No-one can practice this posture without attaining this effect — it is a law of nature. This is an important understanding, for it allows us to see that on every moment, every facet of our being either is or is not addressing natural law, either damages or increases the quality of our being, whether it is through how we use our mind, body or speech.¹ I often see Taoism being taught in the form of esoteric knowledge, however, in the face of *transcendental empathy*, we may understand knowledge to be more of a *symptom* of Tao cultivation rather than its essential identity. Lineages upon lineages teach knowledge such as inner alchemy, qi gong, sorcery, dietary wisdom, martial arts, tantra, or provide intensive textual studies, all of this often within the framework of religion, but no-one ever teaches the “empty clarity” of transcendental empathy. I feel this is but to follow the shadow of the master, but not his heart. I feel it is because of this that the ancient Tao was lost; the emphasis became placed on (ritualizing) the knowledge the Ancients had awoken to, rather than cultivating the transcendental clarity of *not-knowing*. In this book, Lao Zi’s transcendental verses will continue to illustrate this point.

*These two give rise to each other and are in truth the same.
Joined together is to understand the mystery.
This unity is the subtle passageway.*

As explained above, by attaining non-desire we become one with Tao, and Tao allows us to connect with nature and her principles of harmony. This enables us to understand what is worthy of being desired; it gives us a meaningful pursuit in life. Therefore non-desire leads to *skilful* desire. One gives rise to the other. This is desire based upon clarity, and a sense of harmony with existence as a whole.

This skilful desire in turn leads to a greater oneness with Tao. When we look closely we may see that all the laws of nature lead to stillness, such as patience, mindfulness, detachment, and meditation. My own humble ability of entering into mystical communion with nature reveals this is so, because nature is fundamentally on an evolutionary trajectory of stabilizing her original chaos energies released during the Big Bang. We feel this stabilization process as *stillness*. Additionally, in this stillness nature is able to return to the Tao and tap into its infinite energy. Therefore: non-desire leads to the Uncreated realm of Tao > The Uncreated realm of Tao leads to natural law (the principles of life) > This is to attain skilful desire > Skilful desire based upon natural law leads to stillness > Stillness leads to Tao > Repeat. This is what is meant with: *Joined together is to understand the mystery. / This unity is the subtle passageway.*

The transcendental Tao is simultaneously beyond the Created and yet at one with it. This is because the Created is a (quantum) activity of the transcendental Tao, which can be compared to how the body is beyond (not limited to) the mere one activity of *walking* and yet is simultaneously inseparable from it. Therefore, also in this sense, desire and non-desire may be considered to be one, because they both consist of the same Tao. This is what this verse means with: *“These two ... are in truth the same”*.

¹ Buddhism teaches that a human being manifests himself through three qualities: *mind, body, and speech*. Through these three qualities we either do or do not address natural law.

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