

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Lao Tzu's Poetic, Philosophical Treatise

Tao Te Ching

Volume 13 of 14 (*Chapters 73-78*)

Translated by Stephen Mitchell,
adapted and **annotated**

by Terton Lama: Jigme Gyatso, Rime Rinpoche

FIRST edition
2019-a04-08c



Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Contents

Chapter 73.....	pg.	3
Chapter 74.....	pg.	10
Chapter 75.....	pg.	15
Chapter 76.....	pg.	22
Chapter 77.....	pg.	26
Chapter 78.....	pg.	29

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Tao Te Ching
chapter Seventy-three

(73: 1)

The Tao
is always
at ease.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*This could very well be
the theme of this chapter.*

*The Tao is at ease,
as are those who are defined
by their harmony with it.
But could it be “safe” to be it ease?*

*Isn't it wiser to maintain
a cat-like state of hyper vigilance,
like Marge Simpson attempted
when she was wrestling with PTSD?*

*Let's see what the rest of the chapter
has to say about that.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(73: 2)

It overcomes

without competing,

answers

without speaking a word...

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

arrives

without being summoned,

accomplishes

without a plan.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*At various times each of us wishes
to overcome, answer, arrive and **accomplish**,
but we are most likely concerned with the latter.*

*How ironic is it,
that we accomplish more by yielding into centered spontaneity
than we ever could by frenetic contrivance?*

*Oh how often have we mistaken
busy-ness for productivity
or that which seems urgent
with that which is truly important?*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(73: 3)

Its net
covers the whole universe.

(73: 4)

And though
its meshes are wide,
it does NOT let a thing
slip through.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Yes, it can **feel** counter-intuitive
that wide meshes could prevent escape...*

*or that the relaxation of centered spontaneity
could lead to the degree of productivity
that is **MOST** important.*

*Recall how this chapter began:
“The Tao is always at Ease.”*

*Although ease is possible
with some forms of mindfulness,
it is impossible
with the rigidity of concentration.*

*And that is why
I will **NOT** teach authentic Hinduism,
even when it is cloaked
in Buddhist trappings and nomenclature.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Peak Efficiency

*In the meritocracy,
that the majority of human society has claimed to be
for the past twelve millennia,
we each seem to have a vested interest*

*in doing all things, personal and professional,
with peak efficiency.*

*Except it really isn't a meritocracy
where excellence is rewarded
but a kleptocracy where ethics are for the little people...*

*and for the big boys greed is the name of the game
and no holds are barred.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Yet, to prevent a pitchfork uprising
like the torch-wielding villagers in a Frankenstein movie,
the masses are spoon-fed the opiate-like-fable
of well rewarded efficiency.*

*Rather than debate the proposition
the author of the Book of the Beneficial Way
says as much as:*

*“OK, if you want to be efficient,
what’s the most efficient way of being efficient?”*

*It is to use the techniques and philosophies
of Yang’s controlling path of the anti-tao,
or Yin’s acquiescent path of the beneficial tao?*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*After reading the preceding Seventy-two chapters
and their commentaries
it should not come as any surprise
that Lao Tzu taught...*

*that the key to acquiring the efficiency we crave
is NOT by: competing, persuading, summoning,
commanding, controlling, conniving or planning;*

*BUT merely through the practice and mastery
of centered spontaneity.*

*He goes on to promise
that such a lifestyle meets all needs,
in the most wonderful way,
without leaving any unmet.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Tao Te Ching
chapter Seventy-four

(74: 1)

If you realize
that all things **change**,
there is nothing
you will try to hold on to.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(74: 2)

If you are **NOT** afraid
of dying,
there is nothing
you can **NOT** achieve.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Just as we see
in (so called) Buddhist psychology,
the contemplation of impermanence
is seen as an antidote to greed's grasping.*

*Does that mean
that when we truly understand impermanence,
we'll cease to grasp?*

*Or rather,
could it mean that once we recognize our grasping,
the contemplation of impermanence
could be applied like a balm to a wound?*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Ah the presence of a double negative
(and behold, somewhere an English teacher
just fell over dead! [Thanks Lao Tzu.]*

*The dread of dying,
is so old and primal.*

*Which one of us wouldn't scramble and scratch
for even one more breath of life?*

*And yet we're being called
to advance beyond our most ancient of programming.
How are we to fill such a large order?*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Simply by transforming Centered Spontaneity
into a habit.*

*“Not afraid”
does not mean that we are mindlessly oblivious
to a real or potential danger...*

*but rather it connotes
a comfort with the realization
of the very really limits
to our power and wisdom.*

*Ironically, that same Centered Spontaneity
that resigns us to our limitations
can impel us to transcend them,
in ways that could surprise, even ourselves.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Like the man,
cornered by a Tiger,
who surprises both himself and the predator,
by fighting back.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(74: 3)

Trying
to control the future
is like trying to take
the master carpenter's place.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(74: 4)

When you handle
the master carpenter's tools,
chances are
that you will cut yourself.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Rather than serve as an exposition
extolling the virtues in believing in one or more gods,
this passage is a warning
not to play god.*

*In light of our lack
of both infinite insight as well as limitless power,
in our efforts to beneficially “make it happen”
we will most likely shoot ourselves in the foot... ouch!*

*Ironic, is it not, that after telling us
there is nothing we can't do,
we are warned not to play god?*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*How could we reconcile
these two (seemingly) contradictory sentiments?*

*Letting go of our dread of death,
opens us to life's infinite possibilities.
Letting go of our hunger to control our fortune,
opens wide the vault of good fortune.*

*What could be the key to this letting go?
Centered Spontaneity!*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Another look at Efficiency

*We read that fear of death
hinders accomplishment.*

*But the fear of death seems hard-wired into our brain stem,
and for so much of our species' prehistory,
it seems to have assisted our survival.*

*But if we are to know peace
and experience fulfillment
we must escape the habit energy...*

*of being continually on our guard from all dangers
be they real, imagined, recalled, actual or potential.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Ideally the deep, visceral realization
that all change,
including death itself,
is inevitable...*

*and that no amount
of plotting, planning, contriving or controlling
can forever keep it at bay ...*

*could wake us from our trance like pursuit
of petty goals.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*But unfortunately for some folks
the awareness of the certitude of death
actually feeds the intensity
of their controlling tendencies.*

*That can be remedied
by taking a sober look
at how much those self-same tendencies
have served to actually multiply our sufferings.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*The therapeutic realizations
of the inevitability of change
and the folly of our controlling tendencies
comes NOT from contrived contemplations...*

*BUT through the non-analytical and vulnerable practice
of awareness and acquiescence
which feed our patience, compassion
and the simplicity of centered spontaneity...*

*through which we can
intellectually, emotionally, verbally and behaviorally flow
and as such
make the most of this all too brief life.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Táo Te Ching
chapter Seventy-five

(75: 1)

When taxes
are too high,
people
go hungry.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(75: 2)

When
the government
is too
intrusive,

people lose
their spirit.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Our brains are the triune team
of brain stem, mid brain and fore brain.*

*When we give the reigns to the former,
we can become predatory and ruthless.
Viewing people, as tools to be used,
is simply NOT sustainable.*

*Plato's "Republic" paints the picture
of a totalitarian government
that dominates every aspect of its citizen's behavior,
communication and thought.*

*People, likewise, can also be domineering...
that always ends badly.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(75: 3)

Act for
the people's
benefit.

(75: 4)

Trust them;
leave them
alone.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*When we replace our predation with benevolence
and our dominance with vulnerability
we make others (and even ourselves)
much happier.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Don't be a Meddlesome Uncle

*Clearly if a government overtaxes
the consequences could be devastating...*

*but that is not the only way
those with real or perceived authority
could harm those in their care,
even if they don't mean to.*

*Whether the people we are about are:
a species, a gender, a race,
a nation, a state, a community,
a neighborhood, a family or a friend...*

*we could inadvertently harm them
just by being intrusive.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*It's good to wish others well,
but far too often
that becomes license to be overbearing; as in the phrase:
"I know I _____
but I did it out of love."*

*According to the Book of the Beneficial Way,
we must trust other's wisdom enough
to lead solely by example,
from a place of centered spontaneity...*

*that we have cultivated
through the non-analytical and vulnerable practice
of awareness and acquiescence.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Tao Te Ching
chapter Seventy-six

(76: 1)

Men are born
soft and supple;
dead,
they are stiff and hard.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(76: 2)

Plants are born
tender and pliant;
dead,
they are brittle and dry.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(76: 3)

Thus whoever
is stiff and inflexible
is a disciple
of death.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(76: 4)

Whoever is
soft and yielding
is a disciple
of life.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(76: 5)

The hard and stiff
will be broken.

(76: 6)

The soft and supple
will prevail.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Most of us are familiar with Aesop's fables.
Recall the tale of the oak and the reed.*

*The oak looked down upon the reed in disgust.
"You are weak while I am strong." Sneered the Oak.
"When the wind blows and you bend with it, in submission,
while I defy it, in my strength.*

*At that moment a fierce gale began to blow, bending the reed.
The oak resisted the mighty wind defiantly.*

*But the gale grew in intensity, howling with power.
The oak continued to resist, and resist,
and then the sound of the wind was punctuated
by the sickening sound of the trunk tearing at its roots.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*It's work done, the gale subsided,
and (cut off from it's roots)
the tree began the slow process of dying ...*

*all the while wondering
if its fate could have been avoided
if it had yielded in humility.*

*In our confusion and pride
we fail to question the accuracy
of our perceptions, assessments,
assumptions, beliefs and comprehensions...*

*and as such we choose chaos over centeredness
and contrivance over spontaneity.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

The Stupidity of Stubbornness

*Most societies are permeated
by the patriarchal philosophy of Yang's harmful way.*

*As such stubbornness and aggression
is not only common,
but is often lauded
as the way to victory and success.*

*It could be a mistake
to confuse patriarchy
with the shape of our genitals...*

*for not only men,
but many woman have also been conditioned
by the patriarchal perspective.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*For instance during the election of two thousand and sixteen
Tina Fey and Amy Poehler
energetically proclaimed on network television
“...bitches get stuff done.”*

*Although stubbornness and aggression
are hallmarks of Yang’s patriarchy
they are the antithesis
of matriarchal teachings of Yin’s beneficial way.*

*For it insists that flexibility and acquiescence
are the way of greatest, sustainable benefit
for all beings
and the key to truly being a disciple of life.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Tao Te Ching
chapter Seventy-seven

(77: 1)

As it acts
in the world,
the Tao is like
the bending of a bow.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(77: 2)

The top
is bent downward;
the bottom
is bent up.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

We all fear lack and scarcity.

And in the name of heeding their very real threat

we tend to be contrived and chaotic.

Could the Tao provide a solution?

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(77: 3)

It adjusts
excess and
deficiency...

so that there
is perfect
balance.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(77: 4)

It takes from
what is
too much...

and gives to
what is **NOT**
enough.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*The central theme of the Tao Te Ching
is that we must master centered spontaneity
in order to be peaceful and fulfilled.*

*But what about our earthier needs?
What if the best way to get
our financial and corporeal needs met...*

*was to spontaneously flow with the Tao,
instead of flailing impotently
against the hobgoblin of our fears?*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(77: 5)

Those who try
to control...

who use force
to protect
their power...

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

go against
the direction
of the Tao.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Yes, using force
is pretty much the opposite of yielding,
now isn't it?*

*And yielding to the Tao's circuitous path
is what sage-hood is all about.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(77: 6)

They take
from those
who do NOT have
enough...

and give
to those
who have far
too much.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(77: 7)

The Sage
can keep
giving...

because there is
NO end
to her wealth.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*It is sad, is it not,
that the fire of our fear can burn with such intensity
that it utterly consumes our love of others,
no less our very decency?*

*What is the source of her wealth?
It's also the source of her wisdom and creativity,
the habit of centered spontaneity.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(77: 8)

She acts
without
expectation,

succeeds
without
taking credit...

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

and does **NOT** think
that she is better
than anyone else.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*How does she act without expectation?
Because she is centered in spontaneity,
NOT in plan.*

*She does NOT seek credit,
because she has lost sight of herself,
that is why she doesn't compare herself to others,
how could she?*

*One can NOT merely choose
NOT to seek: scheme, credit or pride...
one can only choose to notice, relax as well as flow,
and the rest could take care of itself.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Meeting all Needs

*The result of living in harmony
with Yin's beneficial path
is that all resources...*

*are most sustainably used
in the most efficient way
to meet the needs
of all the beings.*

*This sounds very much
like the resource based economy
suggested by noted American architect, systems theorist,
author, designer, inventor and futurist Buckminster Fuller...*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*wherein resources are managed
NOT according to
greed, competition and cruelty...*

*BUT according to
reason, science,
as well as global compassion and cooperation.*

*In contrast,
those who's actions typify Yang's harmful path
are prone to greedy, controlling,
forceful, short-sided and cruel behavior.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Those who have mastered
Yin's beneficial path
are able to act
with great generosity and wisdom.*

*How are they able to do this?
Just as we have read
in the eighth sentence of the thirteenth chapter
of the Tao Te Ching:*

*“See the world
as yourself.”*

*The Sage of Yin does NOT see their resources
as limited to the possessions of their body,
such as their clothes, their, money, their dwelling...*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*but rather the sage experiences
all minds, all bodies, all objects and all opportunities
as resources for the benefit of all beings.*

*We need to remember that one who has mastered
Yin's beneficial path
does NOT cling to any
agenda, pride, competition or competition...*

*BUT rather flows from the state
of patient and compassionate centered spontaneity
that comes from vulnerably and non-analytically practicing
awareness and acquiescence.*

*And as such the sage leads only
by effortless and spontaneous example.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Tao Te Ching
chapter Seventy-eight

(78: 1)

Nothing
in the world...

is as soft
and yielding
as (*liquid*) water.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(78: 2)

Yet for dissolving
the hard
and inflexible...

nothing can
surpass it.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(78: 3)

The soft
overcomes
the hard...

the gentle
overcomes
the rigid.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(78: 4)

Everyone knows
this is true...

but few
can put it
into practice.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*As we have already read in the fortieth chapter,
the path is yielding like yin,
although we currently ache to advance like yang.*

*The path is to be soft and yielding like liquid water,
although we may currently yearn
to be inflexible like solid ice.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(78: 5)

Therefore the Sage
remains serene
in the midst
of sorrow.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(78: 6)

Evil
can NOT enter
his heart.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Counter intuitive, though it may be,
Lao Tzu's way could give us
the resilience of heart that we long for.*

*Why can't evil enter the sage's heart?
Because he has mastered
the circuitous path of yielding.*

*Of course this infers
that habitually indulging our impulses
to dynamically advance upon the path in a linear fashion...*

*could lead to our moral downfall;
for it paves the path that leads
to the aggression, manipulation and misanthropy
referred to in Star Wars as the dark side.*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(78: 7)

Because he
has given up
helping...

he is people's
greatest
help.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

(78: 8)

True words

seem

paradoxical.

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

Action Movies aren't Documentaries

*How many summer movie action block busters'
feature a hero
so moved by grief, anger, desire, fear, or shame
that they violently save the day?*

Entertaining?

Yes!

Reality based?

No, not so much!

*However a casual stroll
through a municipal park
reveals evidence to the contrary...*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*where tree roots lift and displace huge pavement stones
with almost imperceptible slowness,
blades of grass pierce sidewalk cracks...*

*and even gentle streams smooth and round
the sharp edges of rocks in the fullness of time.*

*Gentleness is also utilized
in the concise meditation manual
attributed to Gautama – the Buddha...*

*where our body and thoughts are relaxed,
our minds are freed
and change as well as cessation are considered.*

*It is not reasonable
that this power of gentleness
could also apply to our loving desire
to meet the needs of others?*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*Yin's beneficial path
whispers to us
to gently and often indirectly be of service
from a place of centered spontaneity...*

*whereas Yang's harmful path
shouts that we MUST take "massive" action
according to the clockwork contrivances
of our schemes and plans.*

*Why is this so?
Because since the Neolithic revolution
about twelve millennia ago...*

*the neural-architecture of our brain stems
and patriarchal structure of our society
have been conditioning us...*

Commentary – of Volume 13 (chapters 73 - 78)

*to rely upon scatteredness as well as contrivance
and ignore, if not outright undermine,
centered spontaneity.*

*In the fictional Star Wars universe
we marvel at the Sith lords...*

*who use their turbulent emotions
of fear, greed, rage and shame
as sources of enormous power.*

*It is any wonder
they are disfigured
in the process?*