

Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

Lao Tzu's Poetic, Philosophical Treatise

Tao Te Ching

Volume 1 of 14 – Chapters 1-6

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Simplicity, Patience and Compassion

Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

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Tao Te Ching
chapter One

(1: 1)

The tao
that can be told
is NOT
the eternal Tao.

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(1: 2)

The name
that can be named
is NOT
the eternal Name.

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Can NOT be named

*Convention dictates that a book about the Tao,
would begin with a definition of the Tao,
but Lao Tzu
seems to have something else in mind!*

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(1: 3)

The UN-nameable
is the eternally real.

(1: 4)

Naming
is the origin
of all
particular things.

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The UN-nameable

*A dichotomy is set between
the UN-namable and the nameable,
as well as between
the eternally real and particular things.*

*On a visceral level, the “eternally real”
could sound much cooler
than merely “particular things,”
couldn't it?*

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Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

(1: 5)

Free from desire
you realize
the mystery.

(1: 6)

Caught in desire
you see **only**
the manifestations.

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Free from Desire

*Again a dichotomy is drawn;
this time between freedom from desire,
and captivity to desire,*

*as well as between realizing the mystery
versus seeing only superficial appearances.*

*At this point the first level of inference
is that it is better to plumb the depth of a mystery
rather than skate along the surface of mere appearances,
like a dog skittering across the kitchen floor.*

*The second level infers
that it is better to be free from the tyranny of our desires
than to be subservient to them.*

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Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

(1: 7)

Yet mystery
and manifestations
arise
from the **same** source.

(1: 8)

This source
is called darkness.

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Arise from the Same Source

Ah ha!

*Just when we thought this was going to be
a predictable diatribe
condemning the tyranny of greed, hate and confusion...*

*Lao Tzu zigs
when it looked like he was going to zag.*

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*Instead of perpetuating the dichotomy
between superior and inferior
as well as reward and consequences,*

*he unifies the two
by exploring their shared source...
darkness.*

*What could that mean?
Let's read on.*

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(1: 9)

Darkness

within darkness

the gateway

to all understanding.

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Darkness within Darkness

*In the west we think of darkness as being evil,
in China darkness was often thought of as Yin,
the feminine archetype.*

*Ignorance could be the overlapping Venn diagram
shared by both the East and West.*

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*Lao Tzu begins his eighty-one chapter opus magus
by inferring that it is only by learning
how to be comfortable and acquiescent to our ignorance
that we could transcend it.*

*And it is to the exploration
of this paradox
that the remainder of his *Book of the Beneficial Way*
is addressed.*

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Tao Te Ching
chapter Two

(2: 1)

When people
see some things
as beautiful...

other things
become ugly.

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When some people see

*Thus begins our study
of inter-dependence.*

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Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

(2: 2)

When people
see some things
as good...

other things
become bad.

Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

(2: 3)

Being and non-being
create each other.

(2: 4)

Difficult and easy
support each other.

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(2: 5)

Long and short
define each other.

(2: 6)

High and low
depend on each other.

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(2: 7)

Before and after
follow each other.

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Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

(2: 8)

Therefore
the sage acts
without doing
anything...

and teaches
without saying
anything.

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Therefore the Sage

*What is the relationship
between inter-dependence
and simply letting things
take their course?*

*Superficially, it could appear
that this second section
is contradicting
the inter-dependence of the first section...*

*perhaps the next section of this chapter
could clear things up.*

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(2: 9)

Things arise
and she
lets them come...

things disappear
and she
let's them go.

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(2: 10)

She has
but does **NOT**
possess...

acts
but does **NOT**
expect.

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(2: 11)

When her work
is done
she forgets it...

that is why
it lasts
forever.

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She Let's them Go

This is what latter chapters refer to as “Simplicity” and what some explain as the simplicity of Centered spontaneity.

*It is part of a larger set known as “The Three Treasures.” Yes, applying the **simplicity** of centered spontaneity requires **patience**...*

*but it's results are profoundly effective and, as such, are the most **compassionate** means of meeting the needs of others.*

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*How is simplicity
reconciled with inter-dependence?*

*The best way
to compassionately make use
of our inter-relation with others
is NOT through scattered or contrived action...*

*BUT through that which flows
from our mastery of centered spontaneity.
The latter's cultivation is explained
in the fifteenth chapter*

*of Lao Tzu – the Sage's book of the beneficial way,
the Tao Te Ching.*

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Tao Te Ching
chapter Three

(3: 1)

If you over esteem
great men
the people become
powerless.

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(3: 2)

If you over value
possessions
the people begin
to steal.

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Over Esteeming and Over Valuing

*Both over esteeming individuals
and over valuing objects
are distinctly un-centered,
and quite forward leaning.*

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(3: 3)

The sage leads
by **emptying**
peoples' minds...

and filling
their cores...

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by **weakening**
their ambition
and toughening
their resolve.

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The Sage Leads

*The Tao inside us
can be called the Te.*

*The lesser Te
is in the Head
(pre frontal Cortex)...*

*and the greater Te
is in our belly
(the seat of intuition).*

*The Sage helps folks
get out of their heads,
into their genius...*

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and transition

from petty superficial goals

to truly empowered centered spontaneity...

that is free of:

agenda, intention, hope and hate.

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(3: 4)

He helps people **lose**
everything they know,
everything they desire...

and creates confusion
in those who think
that they know.

Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

Helps People Lose

*A true teacher
frees his students
from the tyranny
of preconceptions' rigidity...*

*as well as chaos
and contrivance...*

*and helps them to master
Yin's circuitous path
of non-conceptuality, vulnerability,
awareness, acquiescence...*

*compassion, patience,
and the centered spontaneity of simplicity;
which is why
we are then reminded to...*

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(3: 5)

Practice
NOT doing
and everything
will fall into place.

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Practice NOT-doing

*Lao Tzu – the Sage’s Tao Te Ching
(the Book of the Beneficial Way)
is arguably a guide on the path...*

*from servitude to yang
to the mastery of yin.*

*Yang’s path has two extremes.
On one hand
we have the scatteredness
of the unstable...*

*and on the other hand
we have the contrivance
of the control freak.*

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*Yin's antidote to scatteredness
is centeredness,
and it's antidote to contrivance
is spontaneity.*

*When we practice,
no less master,
simplicity's centered spontaneity...*

*we will no longer flail about
incompetently and miserably striving
to make things happen...*

*but instead
we'll let things happen
in the most wonderful way.*

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Tao Te Ching
chapter Four

(4: 1)

The Tao
is like
a well...

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used,
but never
used up.

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Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

Used but never Used Up

*Consider the yang – yin dichotomy
between fear and empathy.*

*When we are slaves to fear
we see scarcity everywhere
and our thoughts and behavior become characterized
by cruelty and competition.*

*When we have mastered empathy
we experience infinite opportunities
and become defined
by compassion and cooperation.*

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*The Tao system of habituating
the circuitous yielding of centered spontaneity
is NOT finite,
like the number of medjool dates in a bag,*

*BUT an infinite, optimized potential
that every being who's brain is equipped with the equivalent
of an R-complex, a limbic system and a neo-cortex
could tap into.*

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(4: 2)

It is like
the eternal **void**...

filled
with infinite
possibilities.

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(4: 3)

It is hidden
but always
present.

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(4: 4)

I do NOT know
who gave birth to it.

(4: 5)

It is older
than God.

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Older than God

*Here Lao Tzu uses humor
to dispel the myth
that “Tao”
is a synonym for “God.”*

*Think of it as merely a system
for living, and loving,
with greater wisdom, simplicity,
patience and peace.*

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Tao Te Ching
chapter Five

(5: 1)

The Tao
does NOT
take sides...

it gives birth
to both
good and evil.

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(5: 2)

The sage
does NOT
take sides...

she welcomes
both saints
and sinners.

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Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

Not Taking Sides

*Lets imagine two adolescents
playing tug of war
at a picnic in the park.*

*Each contestant
not only grips the rope
with white-knuckle-intensity,*

*but has also lowered
their center of gravity
that they may better
“dig in” to the earth...*

*with their feet
to maximize their leverage
while their brows furrow
with intense resolve.*

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*Now let's imagine
a new born spider,
who's single thread of web...*

*has carried it aloft
in the breeze,
destination unknown.*

*When we have mastered
the beneficial way
of yielding,
and centered spontaneity...*

*we'll be less
like the combatants
and more like the spider...*

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*carried aloft
by time and circumstance,
liberated from
intention and agenda...*

*and free
in our compassionate wisdom
of centered spontaneity,*

*neither praising nor condemning,
neither plotting nor planning,
spontaneously compassionate to all.*

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(5: 3)

The Tao
is like
a bellows...

it is **empty**
yet infinitely
capable.

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Empty yet infinitely capable

*We become
Sages of the Tao
by cultivating the habit
of letting go...*

*of all agenda, intention,
hope as well as fear*

*and relaxing into
the playful, loving, contentment
of centered spontaneity.*

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(5: 4)

The more
you **use** it
the more
it produces...

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Numerous failures

*Let us recall the childhood adventure
of learning how to ride a bike.
Who of us rode the bike successfully
the first time we touched foot to peddle?*

*None!
None of us.
Our journey was paved
with spills, abrasions, pain, frustration and tears.*

*That path led through contrived competence,
where our shaky and unstable rides
were fueled by great effort and concentration,*

*to spontaneous mastery
where we were able to ride
spontaneously, habitually, easily and effectively.*

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*How ironic that each of us
carries the unreasonable expectation
of mastering a new skill
effortlessly and immediately.*

*The same holds true of our efforts
to make a habit
of relaxing into the acquiescence of centered spontaneity.*

*Come, let us try often,
and fail often
for numerous failures
are the price we pay for mastery.*

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the more
you **talk** of it
the less
you understand.

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Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

The more you talk of it

I am reminded of the adage,

*“It is a mistake to confuse
the **discussion** of meditation
with the practice of meditation.”*

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(5: 5)

**Hold on
to the center.**

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Hold on to the Center

*We each are born with the tendencies
to push away from perceived pain
and pull towards anticipated pleasure.*

*It is folly to try to eradicate
the mere presence of this impulse.*

*So the inference is
“if we must cling to something,
cling to the center,
for centeredness could be the **antidote** to scatteredness.”*

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Tao Te Ching
chapter Six

(6: 1)

The Tao
is called
the Great
Mother.

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(6: 2)

Empty
yet
inexhaustible...

it gives birth
to infinite
worlds.

Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

Empty yet Inexhaustible

*Performance coaches world wide
laud the flow state.*

*The Tao is a system whereby
we not only enter the flow state
but habituate it
until it becomes our default mode.*

*What is this flow state empty of?
It is utterly lacking:
scatteredness, agenda, greed, hate, and rigidity.*

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*Although the Tao is lacking in those things
it is an inexhaustible resource
because it is NOT an entity, an energy or a commodity,*

*BUT rather a system for mastering:
the passive, vulnerable, non-conceptual
flow of centered spontaneity.*

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It Gives Birth

Savor the choice of words:

“...called ‘the Great Mother’...”

and

“...it gives birth to infinite worlds.”

In a world dominated

by yang’s patriarchal energy

how refreshing it is

to see the Tao correctly attributed to matriarchy.

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Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

*Neither matter nor energy
scheme nor strive
yet they effortlessly manifest as:
worlds, stars, galaxies and the very universe.*

*This Tao system
of vulnerable, passive, non-analytical yielding
is how all these things came to be
or were born, if we prefer the metaphor.*

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Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

(6: 3)

It is always
present
within you.

(6: 4)

You can
use it
any way
you want.

Commentary – to Volume 1 (chapters 1-6)

Any Way you Want

We can choose:

*competition or cooperation,
cruelty or compassion,
rigidity or flexibility,
controlling or allowing...*

*elitism or egalitarianism,
patriarchy or matriarchy,
the clinging to certitude or comfort with ambiguity,
scatteredness or centeredness,*

*contrivance or spontaneity,
aggression or acquiescence,
fear or empathy,
yang or yin...*

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Remember the energy-worker's adage:

*“Matter is led by energy,
energy is led by intention,
and intention is led by words.”*

Which words come readily to mind?

*“It is extremely important
to make the most
of these freedoms
and opportunities.*

*Remembering this
may my mind
ever notice relax
and flow”*

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