

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Lao Tzu's Poetic, Philosophical Treatise

Tao Te Ching

Volume 7 of 14 (*Chapters 37-42*)

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Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Tao Te Ching
chapter Thirty-seven

(37: 1)

The Tao
never does anything,
yet through it
all things are done.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Never does

Here, in a clever piece of subtext, Lao Tzu infers the characteristic behavior of one who has so trained in the path of the Tao that he practices it spontaneously, habitually, easily and effectively.

He infers that one who has so mastered the path of the Tao does NOT act in the manner of yang.

*That is to say, his behavior is NOT:
scattered, contrived, active, coercive or controlling but
instead is centered, spontaneous and free of any agenda.*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(37: 2)

If powerful men and women
could center themselves in it...

the **whole** world
would be transformed
by itself,
in its natural rhythms.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

In its natural rhythms

This is one of my favorite passages.

We read that the whole world could be transformed, and the context infers that this transformation could be positive.

We read that this transformation could be in harmony with its natural rhythms. This is important, because history has shown us that when good hearted folks try to FORCE a beneficial change (I'm looking at you path of Yang), that it ends in disaster. Perhaps that is why in the ninth through eleventh sentences of the sixty-fourth chapter of the Tao Te Ching we read:

*“Rushing into action,
you fail.
Trying to grasp things,
you lose them.*

*Forcing a project to completion
you ruin what was almost ripe.”*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Center themselves in it

This passage not only explains that there is a way we could benefit the world but it tells us how to avoid the pit falls of the yang strategies and techniques that just don't work.

*We are told to center ourselves in the Tao, which is the path yin.
How do we do that?*

By so cultivating centered spontaneity through the vulnerable and non-conceptual practice of awareness and acquiescence to the point of mastery, such that we do so spontaneously, habitually, easily and effectively.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*Having done so, the
right ideas, words and actions, beautifully
flow through us, at the right time and
in the right manner.*

*The text seems to infer that
some people are naturally powerful.*

*And that if these opinion shapers practiced according to
the path of Tao, yin, matriarchy, no-self, love, spontaneity and
ease then humanity (and all we effect) could
be positively influenced.*

*But could this path also increase the
natural power of all who master, no
less practice it?*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(37: 3)

People would be content
with their **simple**,
everyday lives,

in harmony,
and free of desire.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

People would be...

We read that when the powerful have mastered the path of yin, then the whole world could be transformed.

Before we consider what that could this transformation look like, let's take a moment to recall the unrest, fear, anger, conflict and greed that permeate our patriarchal society.

Now imagine its opposite, a matriarchal society where contentment simplicity, harmony and freedom from desire were not only promoted but experienced, and even mastered by its denizens.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*Simplicity is a code word for
centered spontaneity.
Now let's look very closely at this.*

*Using craving to manifest contentment makes
about as much sense as
fucking in the name of virginity.*

*Fun?
Yes!
Effective?
Not so much.*

*Centering and relaxing could be the
key to spontaneously letting-go of desire for
centering could be the opposite of
both hate and greed. For...*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

just as the opposite of hate is NOT love, BUT indifference, what if the opposite of greed was NOT hate, BUT contentment?

Again, we see the dichotomy of greed and contentment.

Peace and serenity are the by products of habituating the practice of noticing and relaxing.

NOTICE: spontaneity is action devoid of desire, or agenda; which is why it must be centered upon passive awareness and gentle acquiescence.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(37: 4)

When there is
NO desire,
all things
are at **peace**.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Desire and peace

*When there is no external desire there
is no external conflict, and
when there is no internal desire there
is no internal conflict.*

*How do we get there?
Externally society must be restructured to
no longer encourage and
reward: cowardice, competition and cruelty but...*

*instead encourage and
reward: compassion, cleverness and cooperation.*

*The vulnerable and non-conceptual practice of
awareness and acquiescence could
create the centered spontaneity to
facilitate this both in...*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*leadership's top down as well as
grass roots' bottom up methods.*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Tao Te Ching
chapter Thirty-eight

(38: 1)

The Sage does **NOT** try
to be powerful;
thus he is truly powerful.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Not try

Welcome to the thirty-eighth chapter of the Tao Te Ching where we begin with one of the central themes of this text, the folly of the active path.

As we've already explored, yin's passive path is the path of the Tao, while yang's active path is essentially the path of the anti-tao.

The power of the Sage comes not from setting goals and then straining, conniving and coercing to make it happen but...

from vulnerably and non-conceptually cultivating centered spontaneity from the formal practice of awareness and acquiescence.

(38: 2)

The ordinary man
keeps reaching for power;
thus he never has enough.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Reaching

By way of contrast the Sage does NOT reach for power whereas ordinary folk do...

ironically the Sage is truly powerful while ordinary folk aren't.

Perhaps, if we're doing what everyone else does, the way everyone else does, for the reasons everyone else has, we...

may not experience the extraordinary life of a sage.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Lama: Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche of Tibet used to say that craving is like a hungry dog, its hunger is never sated.

How ironic it is that those who seek not after power are more prone to experience contentment, whereas those who do seek it are never satisfied.

We must ask ourselves, what is it we most value, power or contentment.

For yang is the dissatisfying path of seeking after power, while yin is the fulfilling path of contentment.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(38: 3)

The Sage does nothing,
yet he leaves nothing undone.

(38: 4)

The ordinary man
is always **doing** things,
yet many more
are left to be done.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(38: 5)

The kind man **does** something,
yet something remains undone.

(38: 6)

The just man does something,
and leaves many
things to be done.

(38: 7)

The “moral” man
does something,
and when NO one responds...

he rolls up his sleeves
and uses force.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

The folly of the ordinary, kind, just and moral

*In sentences four through seven we explore how the ordinary, kind, just and moral, either always do things or do **some**things yet many more or at least **some**things are left undone.*

This is in contrast to the sage, in the third sentence, who does nothing yet leaves nothing undone.

This is NOT just a superficially clever quip like “if you never set a goal, you’ll never fail to meet a goal.”

Rather it is a peek back stage, behind the curtain of the universe. This is how things really work.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

We can all receive flashes of insight about the good and worthy things we could do. Those flashes could come from yang's scatteredness or from yin's centeredness.

The dichotomy of yang and yin can not only be felt in the source of our ideas but in how we apply them.

The yang set of strategies include planning, plotting, striving, straining, coercing, and sometimes violence...

whereas yin's set of strategies is always to act from the centered spontaneity that flows from the vulnerable and non-conceptual practice of awareness and acquiescence.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

One of the darkest examples of yang methodology can be seen in the form of the one who superficially cloaks them self in the guise of the warrior of morality. How ironic that...

this is the one most apt to turn to violence, the darkest of yang's methods. It is almost as...

if they feel self-righteously justified to use ANY means necessary by the loftiness of their stated goals. Perhaps that...

is why in the first and second sentences of the nineteenth chapter it is written:

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

“Throw away holiness and wisdom, and people will be a hundred times happier. Throw away morality and justice, and people will do the right thing.”

Or how in the ninth sentence of THIS chapter we could paraphrase

“when goodness is lost there is the illusion of morality.”

True goodness, kindness and power, it would seem, flow from yin’s centered spontaneity, rather than from yang’s scattered contrivance.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

In other passages we read that the sage detests violence. Yet here, the so called moral man, uses force. Could this...

be an example of Lao Tzu's irony? Could the chaos generated by contrivance be so powerful as to undermine morality?

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(38: 8)

When the Tao is lost,
there is goodness.

(38: 9)

When goodness is lost,
there is morality.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(38: 10)

When morality is lost,
there is ritual.

(38: 11)

Ritual is merely
the husk of the Tao's path,
the beginning of chaos.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Losing the Tao

What could it mean to lose the Tao? It could mean losing the momentum of: vulnerability, non-conceptuality, awareness, acquiescence, and centered spontaneity.

It could mean trading the means of yin for the methods of yang's defensiveness, over-analysis, imperceptions, resistance, scatteredness and contrivance.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

The illusions of goodness, morality, and ritual

As a child I'd watch my mother and grandmother clean, and in true "monkey see monkey do" fashion I'd enthusiastically ape their actions with...

broom, sponge and mop, inadvertently causing more mess than cleanliness.

In the absence of yin's vulnerability, non-conceptuality, awareness, acquiescence, and centered-spontaneity yang will always make a mess of things, even when those things are done in the name of goodness, morality and ritual.

Ritual is especially dangerous for it is profoundly superstitious, childish and utterly divorced from reason and the scientific method.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*Centered spontaneity is so integral to the Tao,
that to lose it, is to lose the path.*

*This path of degeneration seems to culminate in
the façade of ritual which is the ultimate contrivance.*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(38: 12)

Therefore the Sage
concerns himself
with the depths
and NOT the surface...

with the fruit
and NOT the flower.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(38: 13)

**He has NO will
of his own.**

**He dwells in reality,
and lets all illusions go.**

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Flowers and fruit

Consider the apple tree. First it produces a flower, then it's petals fall, and it grows delicious, edible, nutritious apples that it's seeds might spread.

From the perspective of our hunter-gatherer ancestors, although flowers were integral to pollination for the creation of...

future apple trees, if one wished to stave off hunger, no less starvation, today one needed to locate the fruit and not the flowers.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Just as a flower can be very pretty likewise the flash and bluster of yang's path could distract us from the meeting of our most important needs.

The deeply fulfilling path of yin requires us to surrender our own scattered will as well as it's contrivances and move forward from a place of deeply centered spontaneity.

*Perhaps that is why in the tenth verse of the sixth chapter of the gospel of Mathew it is written:
“...your will be done...”*

or in the twelfth sentence of the twenty second chapter of the Tao Te Ching we read:

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*“Only in being lived by the Tao can
you be truly yourself.”*

*It is through meditation’s cycle of
vulnerable and non-conceptual awareness and
acquiescence in harmony with
our natural and uncontrived inhalations and exhalations that...*

*we are able to spontaneously release all
illusions that we might make room for
reality as it really is.*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Tao Te Ching
chapter Thirty-nine

(39: 1)

In harmony
with the Tao...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

the sky
is clear and spacious
the earth
is solid and full...

all creatures
flourish together,
content
with the way they are,

endlessly repeating themselves,
endlessly renewed.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Harmony and benefits

The first, albeit run-on, sentence of this chapter establishes the far-reaching benefits of living in harmony with the Tao...

spanning from heaven to earth and all things in between, namely living beings.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(39: 2)

When man
interferes with the Tao...

the sky
becomes filthy.
the earth
becomes depleted...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

the equilibrium
crumbles,
creatures
become extinct.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Interferences and consequences

This chapter's second sentence functions as a mirror of the first, reflecting the dark consequences that come from...

the folly of not only resisting the Tao but actively interfering with it.

Of course at this point it might be wise to remember that the Tao is not a being or a commodity but merely a system for entering and remaining in the flow state.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(39: 3)

The Sage
views the parts
with compassion...

because he
understands
the whole.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Compassion and comprehension

Who is a sage of the Tao? One who has trained in the path of the Tao to the point of traversing it spontaneously, habitually, easily and effectively.

When considering the heavens the earth and all beings in between he does not consider the parts from a...

predatory, cowardly, greedy, or competitive point of view but rather from a place of compassion and cooperation.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*This is because he understands the whole;
in other words instead of taking a
reductionist point of view, he
takes a systems approach as...*

*Peter Joseph explores in
“The New Human Rights Movement.*

*The approach of reducing
complex circumstances to
their most basic components was
certainly convenient...*

*but it caused more problems than
it solved.*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

When I was a patient I suffered needlessly when the staff at Kaiser Permanente insisted on sending me to many specialists without a truly insightful physician to effectively orchestrate it all and...

see the big picture like a conductor playing the entire symphony.

The folly of reductionism can be likened to the parable of six blind folks examining an elephant by touch and each of the six having divergent experiences.

*The one who felt the trunk,
concluding it was a python,
the one who felt the tusk,
surmising it was a spear...*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*the one who felt the leg,
interpreting as a tree trunk,
the one who felt the ear
concluding it was the great leaf of an banana tree...*

*the one who felt it's flank
insisting it was a wall, and
the one who felt it's tail
concluding it was a vine.*

*Contemporary science has
debunked reductionism in favor of
a systems approach where each element, on
every scale, is...*

*explored in terms of how it effects
other elements and
how other elements effect it as well as
its seemingly individual form and function.*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*This systems approach was lauded more than
twenty-five centuries ago.*

*It could be said that
just as the cherry tree supports its blossom,
comprehension supports our compassion.*

*How are we to prevent the folly of
undermining the harmony of the Tao?
Let's read on.*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(39: 4)

**His constant practice
is humility.**

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Humility?

*What is meant by humility,
in this context?*

*How is not being convinced we're tremendous or
simply the best going to help?
Let's read on.*

(39: 5)

He does **NOT** glitter
like a jewel...

but lets himself
be shaped by the Tao,
as rugged and common
as a stone.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Not glitter... but lets

When watching many of the nature shows narrated by Sir Richard Attenborough we can see that male birds often, preen, strut and display their beautiful plumage in the hopes of winning a mate.

Many males vying for the opportunity to mate with the same female is a great example of competition. And completion, contrivance and effort are prime attributes of the anti-tao path of yang.

Rather than striving to glitter, or display we are taught it is better to acquiesce, allow, and let the Tao shape us.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*In my own life, some of my
greatest misadventures began with
me trying to make it happen.*

*Although it's important to remember that
upon yin's path of Tao this
acquiescence is not rooted in scatteredness but
in the centeredness that comes from passive mindfulness.*

*It is from the state of centered spontaneity that
our greatest ideas, and their optimal execution flow.*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Tao Te Ching
chapter Forty

(40: 1)

Return
is the movement
of the Tao.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Return

Let's take a moment to consider the non-digital, analog clock. You know, the one with one face, twelve numbers and three hands that adorned the front wall of every class room we were ever in.

Whether fast, middling or slow, the path of each hand was as certain as it was circular.

Recall the entertaining Tom Cruise movie "Edge of Tomorrow." Although it's tag line: "Live, die, repeat;" tantalizingly summarized an important theme in that science fiction adventure, it also applies to our lives for...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

we: wake, urinate, defecate, drink, eat, work, recreate and sleep. Unless we're contemplatives then we squeeze in some study and meditation as well. And like...

a runner on a treadmill it's easy to conclude we're going nowhere, which may not be too far from the truth. So...

what's the ideal response to this merry-go-round of a life? That is explored in the next sentence of this chapter.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(40: 2)

Yielding
is the way
of the Tao.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

The way

In view of our cyclic existence, how do we respond? Let's consider yang's anti-tao attitude. It could...

author such sentiments as: "There is no meaning in this. I must do something meaningful with my life. I must do something which will render me important, and my life truly meaningful. I know...

I'll accomplish that. And to do that I'll manipulate myself, others and circumstances in the following manner." Those are most...

likely NOT our exact words for they are far too honest, but they do capture the essence of our motivation and strategy. By the way those...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

meaningful goals could range from getting a: job, promotion, romantic partner, child, health or beauty to getting rich, defeating one's enemies and providing for one's legacy, all the way to...

protecting the innocent, nurturing our ecosystem and helping all of humanity to take its next evolutionary step. Regardless of the banality, selfishness or altruism of our goals yang's methods of...

accomplishing them are always active, coercive, and ultimately, to some degree, destructive. If yang's anti-tao path is...

active, then what could we say about yin's Taoist path? It involves yielding, lots and lots of yielding. Yin too seeks to...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*make the most of its life but
as we are reminded in the twelfth sentence of
the twenty-second chapter of the Tao Te Ching:*

*“Only in being lived by the Tao can
you be truly yourself.”*

*it does so with
a completely different strategy. First, instead of
deciding what goal would add meaning to his life the sage
patiently meditates and lets the next great idea find him. When...*

*it does, he does NOT actively contrive a plan to
implement it BUT rather allows the same
centered spontaneity which brought him this idea to also
bring him his next idea, communication or action. It is the...*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Tao's three treasures of simplicity, patience and compassion which the sage finds meaningful, and they are accessed by vulnerably and non-conceptually practicing awareness and acquiescence. It is also...

worth observing that patriarchy seeks the straightest, quickest and often most violent path to its goal whereas matriarchy is content to flow along a meandering, time consuming path for...

in the words of Mahatma Gandhi:

“The path is the goal.”

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(40: 3)

All things
are born
of being.

(40: 4)

Being
is born
of NON-being.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

NON-being

Behold the pattern illustrated above:

*All things are made of _____,
_____ is made of non-_____..*

*If $3 + 4 = 7$,
and neither 3, nor 4 is 7,
then we can observe that 7 is comprised of things that
are NOT 7.*

*There can be a lot of fear involved in Yang (male) energy.
The path to our goal can often be paved with things which
are most certainly NOT goal. Yet...*

*they can take us to our goal, just the same. In fact,
it is often the only way to our goal.*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Yang thinking feels that the path to joy, must be joyful, and always advance in the direction of joy,

the path away from solitude, must not be filled with solitude, and never advance in the direction of solitude,

and the path to success must be filled with success and always advance in the direction of success. But this is not in harmony with history's evidence.

Yin thinking feels that a path can lead to joy, even if it is not always joyful, and temporarily lead away from joy, a path can...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*lead away from solitude, even if it has
solitude in it, and temporarily leads
toward solitude and the path to success could...*

*actually be paved with failure and
temporarily lead toward more failure, as well. Therefore,
regardless of our goal, it is always safe to
rely upon the Tao's circuitous path of yielding. How do we...*

*find this yielding and circuitous
path (no less travel upon it)? Through centered spontaneity.
And how do we center? By habitually
noticing and relaxing!*

Tao Te Ching
chapter Forty-one

(41: 1)

When a **superior** man
hears of the Tao,
he immediately begins
to embody it.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Superior

From the perspective of the Tao, what makes one superior, is not one's beauty, wealth, fame, age or stature but...

one's ability and enthusiasm to act, unencumbered, from centered spontaneity. It is impossible to...

over emphasize that spontaneity is only sustainable if it is rooted in centeredness and NOT scatteredness.

(41: 2)

When an **average** man
hears of the Tao,
he half believes it,
half doubts it.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Average

It sure would be nice to be superior, but most of us aren't. We're so mired in yang's contrivance of fearful and controlling over-analysis that...

yin's centered spontaneity could feel like a dream that melts upon waking. Behold the, ostensibly, reckless enthusiasm of true greatness; that cares more for action than...

caution, and raw sense data, rather than mere eye-witness testimony. This individual would rather watch a movie than just read a review about it. Behold, the dichotomy of fear and doubt that occupy two sides of...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

the same coin we call belief. Whereas the great are enthusiastic to take action and notice their results, intermediate folks are quite enamored with caution's search for safety in the paper lion of faith. But...

faith is NOT a measure of reality, but only of our ability to contrive and maintain emotional and intellectual rigidities about our perceptions, desires or dreads concerning reality. Faith is a measure NOT of...

reality, but of the stories we tell ourselves about reality, and how we feel about those stories. In "Enter the Dragon," Bruce Lee's character explains to his student:

"...it is like a finger pointing to the moon. DON'T stare at the finger, or you'll miss all the heavenly beauty."

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

It is a mistake to confuse our stories and our feelings, for the reality they claim to concern themselves with. Notice the correlation between belief and perfectionism that can prevent us from taking meaningful action, as if...

it was paralyzing us. The average man or woman regards the desire or dread of faith as an acceptable substitute for taking action and noticing it's result; the superior man or woman does not.

(41: 3)

When a **foolish** man
hears of the Tao,
he laughs out loud.

(41: 4)

If he did **NOT** laugh,
it would **NOT** be the Tao.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Foolish

Imagine a spectrum, on the right we have the foolishness of yang's scatteredness that could immediately respond to anything new or different with greed, hostility or derision. In...

the center we could have yang's average fearful, plotting, scheming and conniving over analysis and...

on the left we could have yin's superior centered spontaneity of the Tao.

(41: 5)

Thus it is said:
the path into the light
seems dark...

the path forward
seems to go back...

the direct path
seems long,
true power
seems weak...

true purity
seems tarnished...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

true steadfastness
seems changeable,
true clarity
seems obscure...

the greatest art
seems unsophisticated...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

the greatest love
seems indifferent,
the greatest wisdom
seems childish.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Experimentation

In the previous chapter the linear nature of Yang's path and the aggressive advance upon it, is contrasted with the circuitous nature of Yin's path and its journey of yielding. Let's take these observations a step further. When confronted with...

that which appears to be a paradox: the superior humbly resort to experimentation, whereas the average arrogantly rely upon reason and the foolish (in their hubris), confusing baser instinct for...

intuition, disparagingly reject it out of hand. May we have the wisdom to recognize that although intuition and reason have their uses, they are by no means the path of greatness. For greatness recognizes the limitations of its...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

reason and intuition as and acts if the next step in their journey of meaningful knowledge lies in noticing and relaxing into the observation of the results they garner from flowing with centered spontaneity.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Seems

Evolution does NOT select for peace or happiness but for survival. It is therefore not a strain to imagine that upon the plains of the Serengeti only our ancestors who were quick to...

perceive threat, and respond to it, lived long enough to pass down their genetic material. Sadly, the ones who may have been more serene and taken a more reasoned approach might...

not have lived long enough to enjoy the pleasures of reproduction. But then is not now, so let us apply the softness of yin's path to our evaluation process and postpone the rashness of...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

greed, fear and aggression, remembering that first impressions can be inaccurate, like confusing a coiled rope for a snake, and that just as it is a mistake to confuse the...

map with the actual terrain, likewise it could be unwise to confuse the way things may seem with the way things actually could be. Ironic, is it not; that...

that which is most effective is not always the most instinctual, or superficially logical.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(41: 6)

The Tao is nowhere
to be found.

(41: 7)

Yet it nourishes and completes
all things.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Nowhere

Just as children instinctively seek the safety of their parents' protection, likewise, given enough stress, adults might neurologically regress and...

seek the safety they hope is afforded by real or imagined divine parents. However such a reliance could undermine the maturation of our empathy, reason and intuition. Therefore it...

could be more empowering to refrain from anthropomorphizing the Tao into a parent-like being and instead remember that it is neither a capricious, inconstant or...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

impermanent being nor a finite commodity but merely a system, a way of approaching reality that is always available to all beings; especially the ones who have the opportunity to non-conceptually and...

vulnerably practice awareness and acquiescence in the cultivation of centered spontaneity.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Tao Te Ching
chapter Forty-two

(42: 1)

The Tao gives birth to One.

(42: 2)

One gives birth to Two.

(42: 3)

Two gives birth to Three.

(42: 4)

Three gives birth to all things.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

What is the “One” that is referred to here? In this text, the void is described as the mother of all things. The void, or the un-carved block are delightful metaphors for the infinite potentiality that...

is made accessible by dropping our chaotic contrivance and embracing our centered spontaneity.

What are the “Two?” Many phenomena are organized under the two categories of Yang and Yin or Male and Female.

What are the “Three?” In this text we are taught of the Three Treasures of: Compassion, Patience and Simplicity’s centered spontaneity. Through the...

mastery of the three treasures, all beneficial things can be effortlessly accomplished.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(42: 5)

All things have their backs
to the female
and stand facing
the male.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Backs to the female

How does the feminine path “...got our back?” Because it’s circuitous path of yielding is most effective, in the long term. Why do we face the male? Because it can be unwise to turn our back on those who...

are ruthlessly committed to aggressively advancing upon the most direct path they can conceive of... IE: capitalism run amok, AKA: no honor among thieves.

This is illuminated by another passage which reads:

*“Know the Male, BUT
rely upon the Female.”*

For just as...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

*Carl Gustav Jung warned us that
it is only by being aware of our shadow self that
we can overcome our shadow self, likewise...*

*it is only by cultivating a familiarity with
our yang nature that we can recognize its tendencies and
rely more effectively upon our yin nature.*

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(42: 6)

When male and female
combine,
all things
achieve harmony.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Combine

If this was the only verse in the Tao Te Ching, and it was considerably shorter, then that would be that, but it's not. Yes, as clever folk we could contrive all sorts of wise-sounding justifications to twist this sentence into...

any meaning that suits us. But as men and woman of intellectual integrity we are drawn to discover the intent of its author, Lao Tzu; and to do that we MUST not only...

take this sentence in the context of its chapter, but we MUST also take this single chapter in the context of all the eighty-one chapters of this book. That being said...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

yin does not rigidly, cowardly, or arrogantly squeeze it's figurative eyes tightly shut, clap its metaphoric palms firmly over its allegorical ears, and rock back and forth hoping that our...

destructive yang impulses will go away. In the vulnerability and non-conceptuality of its passive awareness, it is mindful of all impulses. Rather than foolishly striving to overcome yang impulses through...

selective ignorance or brute force, it triumphs through the cunning marriage of spontaneously, passive mindfulness and yielding acquiescence. All things achieve harmony NOT because yin forcefully grapples with yang (which...

would make it merely yang in disguise like a wolf in sheep's clothing), BUT because it is as if yin's passive perception is gently embracing thorny yang, for although yang might view this encounter as...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

a wrestling match, yin experiences is as a spontaneous and harmless dance. For in the first and second sentences of the thirty-fifth chapter we read:

“She who is centered in the Tao can go where she wishes, without danger. She perceives the universal harmony, even amid great pain, because she has found peace in her heart.”

Or to paraphrase with poetic license,

“The Sage of the Tao is not in danger of being possessed by yang for she perceives the yin potential, even when...

surrounded by yang from without and within because she has habituated the yin potential in her heart.”

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Perhaps that is why in, some variations of, the yang/yin symbol we see a white dot in the belly of the curved black drop, and a black drop in the belly of the white drop.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

(42: 7)

Ordinary men
hate solitude.

(42: 8)

But the Sage
makes use of it...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

embracing his
aleness

realizing he is one
with the whole universe.

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

Loneliness

Loneliness is a specter that can haunt each of us. In fact in super max prisons it has been observed that prolonged, involuntary solitude can actually undermine mental health. So then what is the solution?

Are we to philosophize about universal oneness or recite affirmations in that vane? Not so much. For by merely noticing our loneliness (whenever it rears its head) and relaxing in harmony with...

our in and out breaths (respectively) the illusion of separateness (that is the root of loneliness) could naturally calm down and fade away, in its own time without us foolishly striving to push it away. Of course the...

Commentary – of Volume 7 (chapters 37 - 42)

greatest irony is that the pain of loneliness could provide for some really juicy and transformative meditation. You see, the...

purpose of meditation is NOT to dissolve our loneliness as much as dissolve our resistance to it. Yes, once again, Yin's yielding saves the day.