

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

Lao Tzu's Poetic, Philosophical Treatise

# Tao Te Ching

Volume 9 of 14 (*Chapters 49-54*)

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*Tao Te Ching*  
*chapter Forty-nine*

(49: 1)

The Sage  
has NO mind of her own.

(49: 2)

She works  
with the mind of the people.

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*No mind of her own*

*Unsullied by preconception or agenda, the sage uses her centered spontaneity on behalf of others' well being, meeting them where they're at, not where she anticipates they'll be, for she has psychically yielded to universal interdependence.*

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(49: 3)

She is good  
to people who are good.

(49: 4)

She is also good  
to people who are NOT good.

(49: 5)

This  
is true goodness.

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*She is good*

*She is neither the punisher, nor  
the exploiter. Her kindness is  
not limited by others' ability to benefit her. It  
is truly unconditional.*

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*(49: 6)*

She trusts people  
who are trust worthy.

*(49: 7)*

She also trusts people  
who are NOT trustworthy.

*(49: 8)*

This  
is true trust.

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*The benefit of the doubt*

*Free of the concern, of whether or not it's safe to be vulnerable with others, she does the right thing, simply because it's the right thing, as it's own reward.*



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*(49: 9)*

The Sage's mind  
is like space.

*(49: 10)*

People  
do NOT understand her.

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*(49: 11)*

**They look to her  
and wait.**

*(49: 12)*

**She treats them  
like her own children.**

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*They do not understand her*

*Free of all self-concern, she walks in the centered spontaneity of infinite and limitless compassion. So radical is this, that it confounds the expectations, and preconceptions of...*

*others; engendering in them a poised and centered trusting, that she is not a wolf in sheep's clothing seeking the perfect opportunity to exploit those who trust her.*

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*Grass roots leadership*

*Once artifice and strategy have been stripped away those who strive to lead (no less exploit) men and women in the momentum of patriarchy do so in an authoritarian, top down approach. As if to say...*

*I'm wiser and more spiritual than you, so you must obediently do as I say. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the yin's sage of the tao leads from a grass roots, bottom up approach. The sage has so acquiesced to...*

*universal independence that she empathically resonates with all beings, regardless of their world view (or who they voted for in the previous election). Consequently her ability to give compassion as well as...*

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*the benefit of the doubt have become as limitless as her acquiescence. Folks might not be able to read our minds, but they can feel the vibes we're generating. They know if they're being condemned and exploited or...*

*respected and loved. They might not comprehend the mechanism by which the same vulnerability that multiplies her love and respect also multiplies her insight, but the enormity of her insight feels palpable to them, and...*

*because they trust her heart, they trust her mind as well. For, like a good parent, her greatest priority is the wellbeing of those in her sphere of interaction. The people can sense this, they can feel this and they rejoice in it.*

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*Tao Te Ching*  
*chapter Fifty*

(50: 1)

The Sage  
gives himself up  
to whatever  
the moment brings.

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*(50: 1)*

He knows  
that he is going to die,  
and he has nothing left  
to hold on to...

NÓ illusions  
in his mind,  
NO resistances  
in his body.

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(50: 2)

He does **NOT think**  
about his actions;  
they **flow**  
from the core of his being.



*(50: 3)*

He holds nothing back  
from life;  
therefore he  
is ready for death...

as a man is ready for sleep  
after a good day's work.

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*Ready for death*

*Evolution, it would seem, has selected for an appetite for survival. It is assumed that our predecessors who did not long for survival did not live long enough to reproduce and pass on the genes that express apathy. So we all long for...*

*our next breath, and the one after that, and the one after that without really stopping to wonder if we're happy, fulfilled or helping others experience that as well. We grasp after our next breath, our next meal, our next nap, our...*

*next fuck, our next set of clothes, our next raise, our next job, our next home. We grasp, and reach and strain and then then we die, and then it's the micro organisms' chance to grasp and reach and strain for the components that...*

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*we'd formerly thought of as ourselves. The worms and the rodent's used to join in until we realized we were too civilized for natural decomposition, and that there was a profit to be made embalming the dead with...*

*toxic chemicals that poison the environment and undermine the cycle of life. This is the destructive, meaningless, unsustainable path of patriarchy that the Tao Te Ching refers to as yang. But what about...*

*its opposite – yin? Matriarchy's path is rooted (as we read in the first sentence of this chapter) in yielding. An awareness of our mortality, or the inevitability of the death of both our body and mind reminds us that ultimately, in the arena of...*

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*change, there is nothing permanent to grasp on to, and no less a permanent mind or body with which to grasp. What is it we cling to? Our mind's illusions, our body's resistances? Do we cling to our desires, our dreads? In the second sentence we...*

*see our awareness of impermanence, induces us to let go of our folly of grasping, perfectionism, fear and over-analysis, and instead of ever ruminating, act from the place of centered spontaneity that we've...*

*cultivated through awareness and acquiescence. This lifestyle of letting go of illusions, resistances, perfectionism and fear helps us to open up our creative spigot. What was once a mere drip becomes a unceasing torrent of blessing for...*

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*the world around us. At the end of such a fulfilling life we are at peace and ready for death like Master: Yoda in “Return of the Jedi”:*

*“Soon will I rest.  
Yes, forever sleep.  
Earned it, I have.”*

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*Tao Te Ching*  
*chapter Fifty-one*

*(51: 1)*

Every being in the universe  
is an expression  
of the Tao.

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*(51: 2)*

It springs  
into existence,  
unconscious,  
perfect, free...

takes on  
a physical body,  
lets circumstances  
complete it.

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*(51: 3)*

That is why  
every being  
spontaneously honors  
the Tao.



Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

*(51: 4)*

The Tao  
gives birth  
to all beings,  
nourishes them...

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maintains them,  
cares for them,  
comforts them,  
protects them...

takes them back  
to itself,  
creating  
without possessing...

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acting  
without expecting,  
guiding  
without interfering.

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*(51: 5)*

That is why  
love of the Tao  
is the very  
nature of things.

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*The work of the Tao*

*Our patriarchal society has taught us it's a great big scary universe out there and if we're to survive, no less succeed, we've got to be a fighter. But the matriarchal perspective is much different. In its...*

*view the non-sentient, universal flow state, we call the Tao, has created, and molded each of us individually, and collectively, directly and indirectly. We honor the Tao, not through belief or ritual, but by actively acquiescing to...*

*its processes. This act of "getting out of our own way," allows the Tao to more effectively: nourish, maintain, care, comfort, protect, and receive us. Many popular spiritual traditions implore us to be child-like. But in...*

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*the Tao Te Ching it is inferred that we get to grow up and as adults benefit the world around us. We do so, by continuing to yield to the Tao, thus being its conduit of benefit, and most important by modeling its...*

*attitude (anthropomorphically speaking) of benefiting without: agenda, control, possessiveness, or active interference. The Tao is acquiescent. The degree to which we are benefitted is proportional to our centered acquiescence, as is the degree to which we are of benefit to others, to all others: directly or...*

*circuitously, immediately or eventually, actually or potentially, overtly or subtly.*

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*Tao Te Ching*  
*chapter Fifty-two*

(52: 1)

In the beginning  
was the Tao.

(52: 2)

All things issue from it;  
all things return to it.



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*(52: 3)*

To find the origin,  
trace back  
to the manifestations.

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

(52: 4)

When you recognize  
the children  
and find  
the mother,

you will be free  
of sorrow.

(52: 5)

If you **close** your mind  
in judgments  
and traffic  
with **desires**,

your heart  
will be troubled.

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(52: 6)

If you keep your mind  
from judging  
and are NOT lead  
by the senses...

your heart  
will find peace.

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

(52: 7)

Seeing into darkness  
is clarity.

(52: 8)

Knowing how to yield  
is strength.

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*(52: 9)*

Use your own light  
and return  
to the source of light.

*(52: 10)*

This is called  
practicing eternity.

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*Things that go bump in the night*

*Although all children are frightened of things that go bump in the night, as a fan of television's Saturday afternoon monster movies I was truly terrified of the dark and would have been more than content to...*

*sleep with EVERY light on. Metaphysically, the philosopher Nietzsche cautioned us "Do not gaze too long into the abyss lest the abyss gaze into you." But on the other hand (yet in the same language) Carl...*

*Gustav Jung taught us that the ONLY way to defeat our shadow self was to be aware of our shadow self. Likewise in THIS passage we are taught that true clarity comes from staring into our own personal darkness. That is why it...*

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*is crucial to flow (rather than fight) with our monkey mind, let it show whatever banalities, glories or grotesqueries it pleases, and in response notice what is before (or within) us and relax our body thus...*

*yielding all resistance to it. For doing so is the key to great personal evolution. Just as the children lead you to their mother, the centering that comes from prolonged and consistent noticing and...*

*relaxing leads to the habitual centered spontaneity that we call sage-hood.*



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*Inescapable acquiescence*

*Upon the sage's path of the Tao acquiescence is inescapable. In the first sentence we read that we come from acquiescence, in the second sentence we read that death's final acquiescence is inevitable. For...*

*the third sentence reminds us that when looking back, over our life's course the illusion of free will could be shattered by our perception of how the sheer force of circumstantial momentum. The fourth sentence reminds...*

*us that just as children have issued forth from their mother, likewise our ability to find meaning, peace and resourcefulness in the midst of circumstances, that we have no control over, issue from our practice of...*

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*yin's path. But what about yang's path? In the fifth sentence we are reminded that grasping onto our evaluations and desires trouble our heart and then the sixth sentence redirects us to the path of yin assuring us that releasing our...*

*judgments and cravings increases our peace. In the seventh sentence we are exhorted to practice vulnerable, yielding, mindfulness of our ignorance. In the eighth sentence we are reassured that...*

*doing so is not weakness but strength, for it is inferred that rather than rail against the unknown with superstition, unfounded conjecture and story it could be far better to acquiesce into the profundity of our ignorance, for...*

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*doing so is not only strong in the sense that it builds our character and feeds our maturation but in that it also connects us even more deeply to the intuition and creativity necessary to guide our...*

*intellect from mere cleverness into full genius. For millennia luminaries have counseled their students to start where they're at. To use what little: non-elaboration, vulnerability, awareness and acquiescence they...*

*have to cultivate what patience, compassion and centered spontaneity they can, for this feeds the positive feed-back loop that brings us closer and closer to the mastery of yin's path. Thus kicking open the...*

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*door to experiencing the limitlessness and deathlessness that come from transcending the profound limitations of our narrow, limited body and mind.*

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*Tao Te Ching*  
*chapter Fifty-three*

(53: 1)

The great way  
is easy,  
yet people prefer  
the side paths.

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

(53: 2)

**Be aware**  
when things are  
out of balance.

(53: 3)

**Stay centered**  
within  
the Tao.

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

(53: 4)

When rich speculators  
prosper  
while farmers  
lose their land...

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

when government officials  
spend money  
on weapons  
instead of cures...



Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

when the upper class  
is extravagant  
and irresponsible...

while the poor  
have nowhere to turn...

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all this  
is robbery  
and chaos.

(53: 5)

It is **NOT** in keeping  
with the Tao.

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*Yang's class warfare*

*The first sentence reminds us that that yin's path of yielding is, by definition, easy whereas yang's scattered, contrived path of greed, competition and cruelty is preferred. Although the second sentence warns of...*

*the dangers of yang's imbalance, it is the third sentence that infers the antidote of yin's balance. The dangers warned about in the second sentence are illustrated in the fourth, which is rather lengthy, and the fifth, which...*

*is surprisingly short. The three examples demonstrate how yang's patriarchy favors speculators over farmers, weapons dealers over public health, and the extravagance of the upper class over the helplessness of the poor. The...*

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*fourth sentence does not say this is unsustainable, or even unkind but flat out calls it robbery and chaos. The fifth sentence concludes that “... it is NOT in keeping with the Tao.” Behold the fruit of yang’s indulgence of...*

*the greed, competition and cruelty of the brainstem. How much wiser it would be to promote yin’s embrace of the generosity, cooperation and compassion of the mid-brain.*

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*Tao Te Ching*  
*chapter Fifty-four*

(54: 1)

Whoever is planted  
in the Tao  
will NOT  
be rooted up.

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(54: 2)

Whoever embraces  
the Tao  
will NOT  
slip away.

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

(54: 3)

Her name will be held  
in honor  
from generation  
to generation.

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

(54: 4)

Let the Tao be present  
in your life  
and you will become  
genuine.



Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

(54: 5)

Let it be present  
in your family  
and your family  
will flourish.

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

*(54: 6)*

Let it be present  
in your country  
and your country  
will be an example...

to all countries  
in the world.

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

(54: 7)

Let it be present  
in the universe  
and the universe  
will sing.

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)

(54: 8)

How do I know  
this is true?

(54: 9)

By looking inside  
myself.

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*Life, Family and Universe*

*Our life, family, country and universe: how could we cause them to be genuine, flourish, be exemplary and sing? My merely centering and yielding into the Tao's circuitous presence, like a drowsy ball room dancer, after...*

*a bit too much punch. The universe's jealously guarded secrets, are not discovered through the hubris of aggression's linear path, but through the ostensive folly of the spontaneity born of the dance of noticing and...*

*relaxing, content to be led upon the Tao's incomprehensibly winding road.*

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*Immerse and Embrace*

*The first sentence introduces the idea of being utterly immersed in the practices of the Tao. The second sentence explores the idea of embracing the path, wherein we following the Tao is not...*

*work, duty or obligation but such a privilege and pleasure that we cling to it, like a baby koala latching on to it's mama. The first through fourth sentences enumerate the benefits that come from both being planted in...*

*the Tao as well as embracing it. The first two results are beneficial in their absence and second two are beneficial in their presence. The first sentence promises we won't be uprooted, like a tree tipped over during a terrible...*

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*gale. The second sentence promises we won't involuntarily fall away from our practice of the Tao. The third sentence promises that externally we'll always be honored. Although that might sound...*

*superficial, from the evolutionary perspective, it is not. Compared to the other members of the animal kingdom humans are not distinguished by fang, claw, strength or speed, but rather by...*

*the marriage of cleverness and cooperation. Support of the individual by the collective is so important that it has been posited that the humans who did not possess the drive to belong to the group did not live long enough to...*

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*pass on their genetic material. This drive to belong is felt most acutely during the throws of puberty and can explain many of the poor choices of teenagers. In the context of this primal drive to belong, it could be deeply reassuring that...*

*the path of yin leads to being honored by one's peers, no less accepted. In my late teens I had the profoundly painful experience of striving to "make" my peers love me, in harmony with the strategies of...*

*the yang path. I excruciatingly failed to earn their love and respect. That goal was not to be realized until much later, once I had forsaken the methods of patriarchy and had fully embraced the practices of yin. On a deeper level, the fourth...*



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*sentence promises that by so mastering the practices of yin that we perform them spontaneously, habitually, easily and effectively; we'll never have to worry about being a fake or a phony but rather will ever be genuine and authentic. In...*

*the fifth through seventh verses we consider how our individual practice of the matriarchy's Tao could not only benefit our family and our country, but the very universe as well, causing them to flourish, be...*

*exemplary, profoundly happy and joyous. It also bears mentioning that we move from the selfishness of MY family and MY country to OUR universe. The importance of this cannot be over emphasized for the path from yang to...*

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*yin is a journey from cruelty and competition to compassion and cooperation. The compassionate yearning for all beings to benefit as a result of our contemplative acquiescence has been expressed in the Sadhana with the words:*

*“May all who recall, mention,  
hear, touch or see me  
practice mindfulness, insight  
and compassion;*

*spontaneously, habitually,  
easily and effectively.”*

*The eighth sentence raises the question of voracity. How does the author of this text know of these promises? In the ninth sentence it is explained that these insights are not the product of yang’s cravings or contrived cleverness, but...*

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*the product of having consistently, non-conceptually, and passively practiced the awareness and acquiescence that give birth to patience, compassion and the simplicity of centered spontaneity.*

Commentary – of Volume 9 (chapters 49 - 54)