

MYSTICAL PATHS OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

MYSTERIES of the TAO



Bridging East and West

ELIZABETH CLARE PROPHET

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by Elizabeth Clare Prophet

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Introduction

Could the ancient Tao-te Ching reveal deep parallels with Christian, Buddhist, and Hindu mysticism? What if each of these spiritual paths is a cultural guide to return to the same Divine Source that has never truly left us?

If this idea sings to a part of you that has been searching for truth beyond dogma, and light beyond the dark confusion of modern life, then welcome. This book is for you.

What does it mean to “do nothing” and yet “leave nothing undone”? How can “slipping into the shining sea of the Great Tao” help us gain self-awareness? Studying both the Tao-te Ching and writings from scholars and mystics throughout the world reveals the wise and compassionate Oneness of our universe.

Looking at Taoism through the lens of the mystical truths of the world’s religions and the teachings of the ascended masters enriches life in a way not found in most modern understandings of religion. When we go beyond the dualism of relative good and evil, the divide and conquer tactics of Church and State, and the superstitions built over millennia of suppressed truth, we enter the path of true soul liberation.

This book is a collection of lectures on the Tao given by Elizabeth Clare Prophet to the students of the ascended masters. Not only bridging Eastern thought and Western beliefs, her insights bridge ancient understanding and new spiritual revelations. By coming to understand the Great Tao, you come to understand the First Cause, Brahman, the Dharmakaya, and the indwelling Christ. For the Tao is the Great Mother, containing all of cosmos within herself.

If this is your first book on the teachings of the ascended masters, this is a powerful entry point. Ascended masters are the great ones who have gone on before us. They are the saints, the immortal ones, the bodhisattvas and buddhas. Reintroduced to the modern Western understanding by the Mahatmas and the Theosophical Society in 1875, the ascended masters teach our souls on the inner as well as reveal ancient mystery teachings and new spiritual dispensations. Mark and Elizabeth Clare Prophet served as messengers of the ascended masters for the second half of the 20th century.

As a seeker of truth and wisdom, you will recognize many of the ascended masters, as they founded their own schools of thought during their time on earth. Zarathustra and Gautama Buddha, Jesus and Krishna, Mother Mary and Kuan Yin—these are all souls who gained permanent union with God and yet tarry with us in the Matter sphere. They reach out their hands for us to follow them, for the earth to shed the illusion of the energy veil and to reunite with divine Reality.

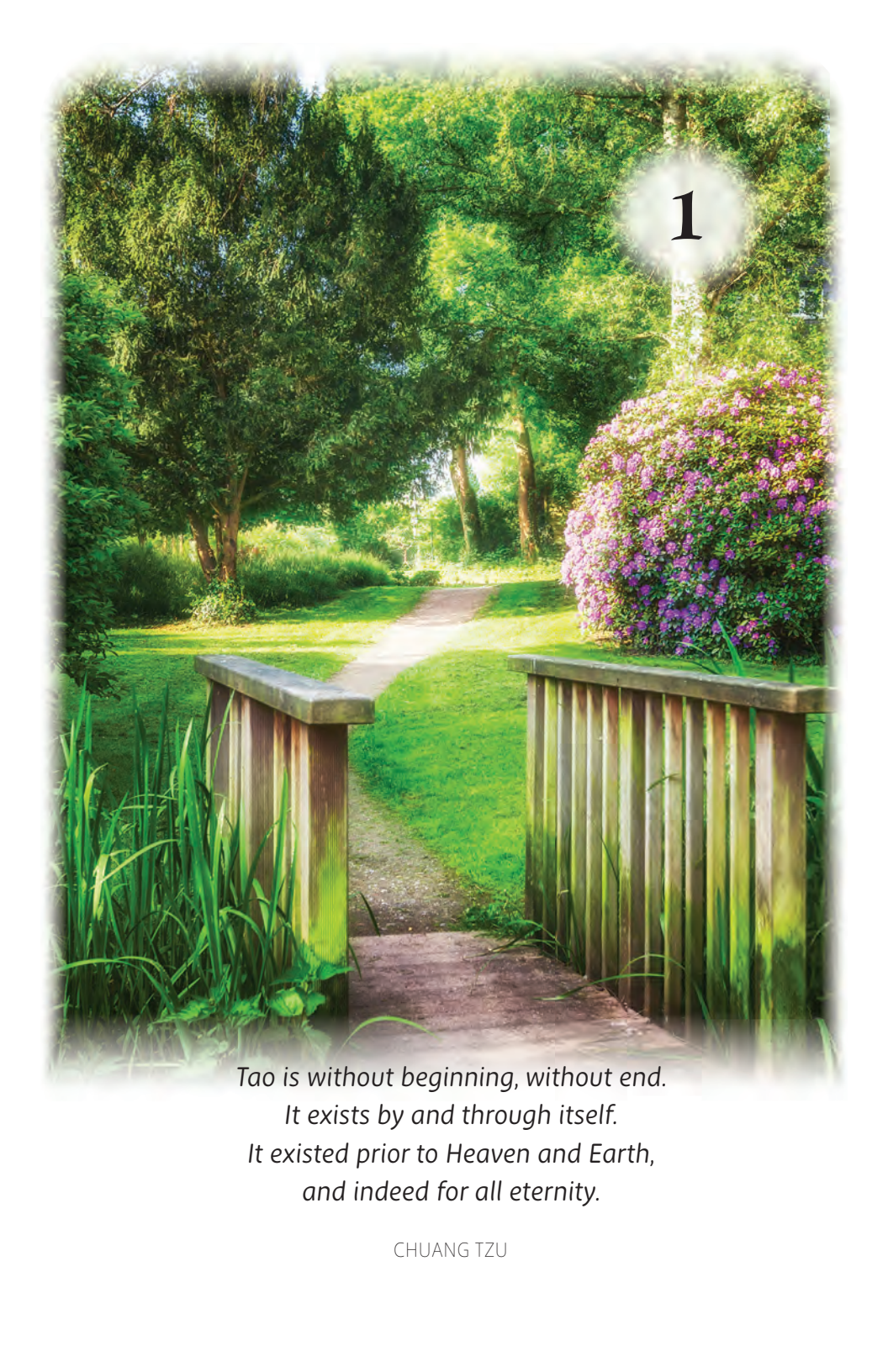
Through studying the Tao, you begin your journey to understanding the fabric of Creation. Here you can skip past the regulations that keep thousands of religious people so disparate from each other and instead approach the wisdom of the heart.

Lao Tzu does not claim that his God is more real than yours, he does not even claim to know God better. He gives your soul puzzles that bring her closer to realizing the Tao. Elizabeth Clare

Prophet gives you deeper glimpses into these puzzles, illuminating layers of meaning through an understanding of the wisdom traditions and the mystical truths of the world's religions.

When you follow “the Way” as Jesus taught it, you are walking a path of the Tao. When you find union with the Tao, you are no longer discouraged, no longer afraid, no longer alone. You “lean on a pillar that is never shaken and travel a road that is never blocked.” You learn “from a teacher who never dies” and stand invulnerable at the very center point of equilibrium.

THE EDITORS

A photograph of a garden path. In the foreground, a wooden gate with vertical slats and a flat top stands on a stone path. Beyond the gate, a dirt path leads through a lush green lawn. To the right of the path is a large, dense bush of pink flowers. The background is filled with tall, leafy trees, and sunlight filters through the leaves, creating a dappled light effect. A large, stylized number '1' is superimposed on the upper right side of the image, partially obscured by a soft, white, cloud-like shape.

1

*Tao is without beginning, without end.
It exists by and through itself.
It existed prior to Heaven and Earth,
and indeed for all eternity.*

CHUANG TZU



Tao literally means "way." . . .

In Confucianism Tao means the "way of right conduct."

*But in Taoism it connotes the nature of the universe,
or the way the universe operates.*



CHAPTER ONE



The Goal of Taoist Immortality

In the Taoist writings of Chuang Tzu we read, “You are old, Sir, while your complexion is like that of a child;—how is it so?”

The reply was, “I have become acquainted with the Tão.”¹

Let us now acquaint ourselves with the Tao and be at peace. The Tao is the key to our immortality.

What Is the Tao?

The term *Tao* was used in ancient China long before the founding of Taoism. Some ascribe the concept to the legendary Yellow Emperor, who lived during China’s golden age, almost five thousand years ago.

Tao literally means “way.” Originally it probably meant “road” or “path” and was later used to describe a method or correct course of conduct. In Confucianism *Tao* means the “way of right conduct.” But in Taoism it connotes the nature of the universe, or the way the universe operates. You may not think it’s important to know the way the universe operates but it is all-important because you are simply a microcosm of the great Macrocosm.



The Chinese character for *Tao* is made up of two elements. The one on the left represents the feet. It means “moving on,” “to run,” or “to progress by degrees.” The one on the right represents the head or a leader. The twentieth-century translator and scholar, Wing-Tsit Chan, says the two elements—the head and feet—originally conveyed “that on which something or someone goes, a path, or road.” He says that it was

later extended to mean “method,” “principle,” “truth,” and finally “reality.” All of this is well summed up in the common English translation, “the Way.”... Hitherto the connotation had been social and moral, but in Lao Tzu it connotes for the first time the metaphysical.²

Lao Tzu and the Tao-te Ching

Taoism is one of the great movements in Chinese religion and philosophy, based chiefly on the teachings of the sixth century B.C. Chinese sage Lao Tzu, as written in the Tao-te Ching. Lao Tzu’s teachings deeply influenced Chinese culture, playing a significant role in the development of Chinese literature, calligraphy, painting, music, martial arts, and other cultural traditions.

Lao Tzu was the subject of many works of art. At the foot of

Many have commonly heard his name pronounced
Lao Tzoo, but it is correctly said Lao Tzǔ.

In the transliteration from Chinese to English,
the *u* in *tzu* was meant to be a short *u*.

So it’s Lao Tzǔ and not Lao Tzoo.



Stone statue of Lao Tzu at Qingyuanshan

By N509FZ - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=94957745>

Mount Qingyuan in Quanzhou, China, is the oldest surviving Taoist stone statue in China: a statue of Lao Tzu carved from a massive granite boulder during the Song Dynasty (A.D. 960–1279). There is an eleventh-century depiction of Lao Tzu riding a water buffalo, by Ch'ao Pu-chih. And in 1924, the Russian painter Nicholas Roerich painted Lao Tzu riding an ox on a path through a bamboo grove on his way to the sacred Mount Kailas. There is so little written of Lao Tzu that some believe he may have been a legendary figure, although there is a strong tradition in Confucianism that he did live in that distant century.

While Lao Tzu is considered to be the founder of Taoism, the doctrine of the Tao set forth in the Tao-te Ching probably did not originate with him. One Chinese legend says the philosophy originated in the third millennium B.C. with the ruler known as the Yellow Emperor, and that it was transmitted orally from generation to generation until Lao Tzu wrote it down in the Tao-te Ching. The Yellow Emperor is said to have reigned from 2696 to 2598 B.C.—for almost a century!



Lao-tzu Riding an Ox

Tao-te Ching means “Classic of the Way and of Virtue” or “The Book of the Way and Its Power.” *Ching* being the Chinese term meaning “classic” or “scripture,” it is a title given to books that are highly venerated.

The Tao-te Ching was originally known as the *Lao-tzu* or *Laotse*. Later an emperor of the Han dynasty gave it the title Tao-te Ching after the two main concepts of the book: *Tao*, meaning “way” and *Te*, meaning “virtue” or “power.” Hence, another translation of the title might be phrased as “The Way of Virtue Scripture.”

The Tao-te Ching is so enigmatic and mystical that over fifteen hundred commentaries have been written on it. It has been translated and interpreted by many writers, some of which will be introduced to you in these lectures.

The Old Master

Lao Tzu’s name means “Old Master” or “Master Lao.” It is a term of endearment and respect. It is the view of one Taoist scholar that “old” refers to the old wisdom that Lao Tzu perpetuated. China’s first historian, Ssu-Ma Ch’ien, said that Lao Tzu held the position of *shih* in the royal court of the Zhou dynasty. In those days a *shih* was a scholar who specialized in astrology and divination and was the historian and custodian of the sacred books—the most ancient records.

Taoist tradition portrays Lao Tzu as a simple, unassertive, and profoundly mystical man. Although he is known as the founder of one of the world’s great religions, he created no systematic teaching, no creed or set of rules to follow. Lao Tzu was described by James Legge as a solitary thinker with no followers.

Legend has it that the sage, foreseeing the decay of his civilization, set off alone for the mountains of the western frontier. The guardian of the mountain pass beseeched him to pause for a while and write down his teachings before retiring from the world. Lao Tzu wrote a book of sonnets in two parts, comprising in all a mere

five thousand words. In this book, he discussed his conception of the vitality of the Tao. He left this book with the guard, then set off over the high pass, never to be heard of again. Other legends say he headed west to convert the barbarians and to spread his teachings throughout Central and South Asia.

James Legge writes in *The Texts of Taoism* that

the *Tao Tê Ching* ascribed to him is an immortal work in which he expounds his ethical paradox of *wei wu wei*, “doing not-doing.” . . . In fact, it was contradictory for Lao-tzŭ to write a book, even when he was urgently persuaded to do so . . . as he was about to leave his country. It is, indeed, due to this book that he became as renowned as Confucius, not only in their own country but all over the world . . . though this is altogether against his will and philosophy. How strange the paradox of history is! . . .

We are thankful to him for having left this masterly piece of philosophical wisdom. Confucius was great in his way, no doubt, but without Lao-tzŭ Chinese thought would have been much the poorer and the world would have missed a unique contribution to its thought-treasure.³

Another literary work important to Taoism is by Chuang Tzu, who is considered to be a founder of philosophical Taoism along with Lao Tzu, and whom Legge describes as

the greatest of the philosophers, poets, and literary essayists in the entire history of the Taoist School—more than that, perhaps in all fields of Chinese literature. His writings consist altogether of thirty-three essays under the general title of the *Chuang-tzŭ*. These are mostly stories and anecdotes, real and fictitious, which are supposed to have taken place between various classes of people: Confucians, Taoists, statesmen, scholars, feudal lords, artisans, farmers, fishermen, butchers, criminals, etc. The main trend of these stories is the elucidation from various points of view of the author’s philosophy of life, Nature, and human

relations. Not only are Lao-tzū's ideas brought out here in contrast to the Confucian but they are presented in entrancing style and masterly finish.⁴

Next to Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu is the most important figure in early Taoism.



Zhuang Zhou, or Zhuangzi [Chuang Tzu]
c. 4th century B.C.

Taoism— “A Purely Metaphysical and Mystical Religion”

Author Jean Campbell Cooper begins her book, *Taoism: The Way of the Mystic*, by pointing out the problem confronting anyone who sets out to write about Taoism:

It must be an attempt to express the inexpressible, to “unscrew the inscrutable,” since the Tao is the ultimate mystery. . . ; that which surpasses all human definitions and contingencies and all finite thought.

However, though the Tao cannot be expressed in words, silence is also inadequate. “It cannot be conveyed either by words or by silence. In that state which is neither speech nor silence its transcendental nature may be apprehended.” [*Chuang Tzu* XXV] From which it follows that Taoism is a purely metaphysical and mystical religion. Other religions have their mystical aspects; Taoism *is* mysticism. . . . It is primarily a cosmic religion, the study of the universe and the place and function of man and all creatures and phenomena in it.

The word “Tao” is always left untranslated as it is regarded as indefinable. Its import is too great to be contained in any one word. It is best understood by inference. . . . The ideograph for the Tao is made up of two radicals: the Head, or Leader, and the Feet, or Progress by Degrees. . . . The two together giving the suggestion of intelligent movement along a way as well as of a pupil following a master, while the combination of the Head and Feet also implies the whole man and all that is right and normal and in conformity with the laws of nature.

In Taoism the Tao is the all-embracing First Principle and source of all being, to which all things ultimately return.

Cooper writes further:

Certainly both Lao Tzu and Confucius constantly refer to the Tao in connection with “the Sages of old” of China’s Golden Age, and all three religions of China . . . used the word. It is possible, however, that although the term “Tao” existed before Lao Tzu, it may have contained the meaning of the Way merely in the sense of method, or correct conduct, as it remained in Confucianism, while Lao Tzu developed, and was solely concerned with, its metaphysical connotations. For him it was no limited way or method, but the transcendental First Cause, the Primordial Unity,

the Ineffable, the timeless, all-pervading principle of the universe, giving rise to it yet undiminished by it; . . . that which preceded the creation of Heaven and Earth. It is called the Absolute, the Ultimate Reality, the Nameless, the Portal of all Mystery, the Cosmic Order. Some liken it to the Atman of Hinduism, the “Suchness” of Buddhism, the Ain Suph of Qabalism or the Monad of the Greeks, that which has neither qualities nor attributes. But even such definitions are, in a sense, misleading for, in the words of the *Tao Tê Ching*, “The Tao that can be expressed is not the eternal Tao, the Name that can be defined is not the unchanging Name.”

The Tao is the animating principle of life that sustains all creation and is *in* all creation. The Tao is the *essence* of everything.

Cooper then quotes Chuang Tzu, who writes:

“The very name Tao is only adopted for convenience sake. . . . Tao is beyond material existence. . . it may be transmitted, but it cannot be received (possessed). It may be attained but cannot be seen.” . . . “Tao cannot be heard. Heard it is not Tao. It cannot be seen. Seen it is not Tao.” . . . “Tao makes things what they are, but is not itself a thing. Nothing can produce Tao, yet everything has Tao within it.” . . . “Tao is without beginning, without end.” It “exists by and through itself. It existed prior to Heaven and Earth, and indeed for all eternity.”⁵

And so it is that which precedes the known God. We are back to the unmanifest God, before the Creation.

A Path of True Pragmatism

Originally the Tao-te Ching seems to have been written as a handbook for the ruler or sage-king on how to rule by the power of the Tao.

Wing-Tsit Chan writes in *The Way of Lao Tzu*:

Eighty per cent of the *Lao Tzu* is devoted not to the substance of Tao but to its function, particularly to its operation in society. The chief subject of the book is how to live, including ethics, government, and diplomacy.

Perhaps Taoism and its ancient teachers were the very first ones to present to us a path of true pragmatism: How does the universe work and how do we work in the midst of the Great Tao?

The perfect ruler was seen as a sage who would return his people to a life of simplicity, innocence, and harmony with the Tao.

Some therefore believe Lao Tzu was speaking to an elite group. But as Wing-Tsit Chan points out, this is not the case.

The sage is no more than an ideal person, which everyone could become through practice of Tao.⁶

Taoists later used the Tao-te Ching as “the creed of the recluse” and advocated withdrawal from public life and officialdom. This ideal of the Taoist mystic/hermit became a prominent theme in Chinese thought. However, in the fourth century B.C., Chuang Tzu produced texts geared more to the private path of the individual.

“The Mother of the Universe”

As we enter into the philosophy of Lao Tzu—the humble man of few words and of perfect expression on the conundrums of life—we begin to feel that we are approaching a friend, and are embarking on a journey with him where he unfolds the mysteries of the Tao that came to him through the fire of his heart, which is always the sign of the true mystic.

Lao Tzu said that the Tao is the essence of everything, and yet he said you can never really put your finger on it or give it a name.

Chan translated chapter 25 of the Tao-te Ching, wherein Lao Tzu wrote:

There was something undifferentiated and yet complete,
Which existed before heaven and earth.
Soundless and formless, it depends on nothing and
does not change.
It operates everywhere and is free from danger.
It may be considered the mother of the universe.⁷

The Tao “may be considered the mother of the universe”—the Great Mother who creates and nourishes all things.

Translator Ellen M. Chen considers the Tao-te Ching to be “a hymn to the power and love of Tao as the Great Mother.”⁸

Lao Tzu refers to the mother in chapter 52 as well.

The world had a beginning,
Which can be considered the mother of the world.
Having attained the mother, in order to understand her
children,
If you return and hold on to the mother, till the end of
your life you'll suffer no harm.⁹

This is from Robert G. Henricks' recent translation of the Tao-te Ching, which is based on manuscripts discovered in 1973 in the village of Ma-wang-tui in Southcentral China. These manuscripts are a significant find because they are more than five centuries older than any other known copies of the Tao-te Ching and are therefore considered to be more authoritative and closer to the original version of this scripture.

Like other versions of the text, these manuscripts were divided into two halves: one called the *Tao* (or “Way”) and the other called the *Te* (or “Virtue”). However, the two halves were switched from their usual order, the *Te* section coming first. So the title given to the recently discovered text is Te-tao Ching instead of Tao-te Ching.

Henricks writes in the introduction of his book *Lao-Tzu: Te-Tao Ching*:

The starting point for understanding the philosophy of Lao-tzu is understanding what he means by the Tao, or the Way. The Way is Lao-tzu's name for ultimate reality (though he continually points out that he does not know its *true* name, he simply "calls" it the Way).

Lao Tzu's chapter 25 in Henricks' *Te-Tao Ching* is translated as:

I do not yet know its name:

I "style" it "the Way."

Were I forced to give it a name, I would call it "the Great."

"Great" means "to depart";

"To depart" means "to be far away";

And "to be far away" means "to return."

Returning to Henricks' commentary:

For Lao-tzu the Way is that reality, or that level of reality, that existed prior to and gave rise to all other things, the physical universe (Heaven and Earth), and all things in it, what the Chinese call the "ten thousand things." The Way in a sense is like a great womb: it is empty and devoid in itself of differentiation, one in essence; yet somehow it contains all things in seedlike or embryo form, and all things "emerge" from the Tao in creation as babies emerge from their mothers.

And so we have the tremendous sense of the Tao as the Great Womb of cosmos that gives birth to all things. It is a mystical contemplation of something we sense and know with our innermost knowing. And it is well that Lao Tzu called it simply "the Great."

"But," says Henricks,

the Way does not simply give birth to all things. Having done so, it continues in some way to be present in each individual thing as an energy or power, a power that is not static but constantly on the move, inwardly pushing each thing to develop and grow

in a certain way, in a way that is in accord with its true nature. The Way *in* things is generally what Taoists mean by *te*, “virtue.” But note that Lao-tzu uses “virtue” in his text in two different ways. On occasion it means this life-energy in things . . . but in other places . . . it seems to mean virtue in the sense of morality, the sense in which it is used by the Confucians.

That the Tao is a feminine reality and a maternal reality thus seems clear. It is not surprising, therefore, that Lao-tzu refers to the Tao as the “Mother” in no less than five places.

We have the great sense of Lao Tzu knowing what Mother is in the cosmic sense. And this is why we are touched by realms of highest light when we read his word, his writings.

We are one with him through the Tao and we sense his mystical awareness. And the very fact that he had this awareness in physical embodiment even as he walked the earth as “an immortal” in that body means that he has quivered this warp and woof of a physical cosmos with this enlightenment, which we can now partake of not only because he wrote it down but because he experienced it. And in his experiencing of it, he left that record in all planes and levels of this physical universe. Lao Tzu is unascended, and so we can feel his presence still, as a part of the universe that we occupy.

The Tao-te Ching has become one of the most cherished scriptures of the world, having been translated second only to the Bible in quantity. It is because people find in it the thread of contact with their own Tao, their own reality, and that reality is one for all of us.

Returning to Henricks’ translation of chapter 25, we read:

There was something formed out of chaos,
That was born before Heaven and Earth.
Quiet and still! Pure and deep!
It stands on its own and doesn't change.
It can be regarded as the mother of Heaven and Earth.¹⁰

We earlier read Henricks' translation of chapter 52, where Lao Tzu refers to the "mother of the world." The following is Arthur Waley's translation of the same chapter in his book *The Way and Its Power*:

That which was the beginning of all things under heaven
We may speak of as the 'mother' of all things.
He who apprehends the mother
Thereby knows the sons.
And he who has known the sons
Will hold all the tighter to the mother,
And to the end of his days suffer no harm.¹¹

Harmlessness comes about by holding onto the mother, but one cannot hold onto the mother unless one has perfect love for that mother, perfect peace, perfect harmony. So the very holding on and the ability to hold on shows a way of harmlessness.

When you feel the intimations of reality and the great love of this reality, it is painful to be outside of it. The only surcease from that pain is, for the moment, the much greater pain of wrestling with depths beneath depths beneath depths of records of the misuse of the Tao that has become like concrete, as the anti-Tao.

We must wrestle in the etheric body, the mental body, the desire body and, yes, in the physical body itself. The physical body contains within itself a consciousness of mortality that it does not desire to surrender, that it fears to surrender because it is so much a part of the law of death, of mortality.

So we come to understand as we pursue the Way what it really means to disassociate ourselves from the law of mortality and all the corollaries to that law that we ourselves have made and with which we have confined ourselves, compartmentalized ourselves, and separated ourselves from the Great Tao.

We cannot become immortals unless we become one with the Great Tao. We cannot become one with the Great Tao until we conquer death and hell within ourselves. Jesus came to demonstrate that.

Lao Tzu saw it, realized it, and wrote it down in another time. And it has been written again and again. It is the universal message of the Divine Whole that we would enter.

Reading again from Waley's translation:

He who apprehends the mother
Thereby knows the sons.

The sons who are the Christed ones, the Buddha ones.

And he who has known the sons
Will hold all the tighter to the mother,
And to the end of his days suffer no harm.

Henricks says the "selfless 'mothering' of the Tao is best described in chapter 34." His translation in *Te-Tao Ching* is:

The Way floats and drifts.
It can go left or right.
It accomplishes its tasks and completes its affairs,
and yet for this it is not given a name.
The ten thousand things entrust their lives to it,
and yet it does not act as their master.
Thus it is constantly without desires.
It can be named with the things that are small.
The ten thousand things entrust their lives to it,
and yet it does not act as their master.
It can be named with the things that are great.
Therefore the Sage's ability to accomplish the great
Comes from his not playing the role of the great.
Therefore he is able to accomplish the great.¹²

The Way is perpetual movement. This is my statement upon contemplation of the Tao. The Way is perpetual movement. It is the Great Causal Body of cosmos, the Great Causal Body of the entire cosmos, yes, the womb of the Divine Mother out of which all things are made and to which all things return.

Wing-Tsit Chan's translation of this same chapter is:

The Great Tao flows everywhere.
 It may go left or right.
 All things depend on it for life, and it does not turn away
 from them.
 It accomplishes its task, but does not claim credit for it.
 It clothes and feeds all things but does not claim to be
 master over them.
 Always without desires, it may be called The Small.
 All things come to it and it does not master them;
 it may be called The Great.
 Therefore (the sage) never strives himself for the great,
 and thereby the great is achieved.¹³

Returning to Henricks' commentary:

There is an analogy that works well in helping us see exactly what kind of thing the Tao is and how it works. In that analogy the Tao resembles an untended and uncared-for ("uncultivated") field, and the varieties of wildflowers that grow in such a field represent the ten thousand things. Were you to go to such a field in the winter, you would see only brown soil or white snow. . . . Should you return to that field in May or June, you would discover that a marvelous transformation had occurred, the field now being filled with all kinds of wildflowers. There are, as it were, "ten thousand" different varieties of flowers, with each of the species . . . being somehow unique in color and shape. . . . What had appeared to be devoid of life in the winter was in fact a very fecund womb, containing within itself in its oneness the seeds and roots of all different things. . . .

For the field continues throughout the summer to care for and nourish each of its "children," supplying them with the water and nutrients that are vital for life. And in this nurturing work, the field cares for all of the flowers without discrimination, and it takes no credit for all that it does. . . . Finally, the field accomplishes all that it does "without taking any action" . . . that is to say, we never see the soil actively doing anything; all that happens seems to happen on its own "by nature."

This nature is the nature of the Great Causal Body of cosmos, the Great Tao, out of which all things were made. The Tao has “endowed” everything with the component of itself that makes that thing unique in its essence and design, capable of fulfilling its reason for being.

It is the principle of the seed within itself. All things created have the seed within itself to realize the fullness of the reason for being. Hence the earth is endowed by the Tao with an active, living, pulsating reality capable of perpetuating all who live upon it and each individual part of the whole.

The field is a microcosm of the totality of the Great Central Sun. And the Great Central Sun is the flowing nucleus of the Great Tao that encompasses all.

Henricks says:

One of the things said about the Tao in the *Lao-tzu* a number of times is that it “does nothing, and yet there is nothing left undone.”

To me this is the meaning of I AM THAT I AM, or in the sense of the Divine Mother ISIS: what *IS* divine Reality simply *IS*. Therefore the I AM THAT I AM, or ISIS, IS IS.

ISIS is the individed whole in equilibrium. So is the I AM THAT I AM. It is the plus/minus polarity as one, so that it appears neutralized. Its Be-ness “does nothing and yet there is nothing left undone.” It is the active and the passive become one. It does nothing yet nothing is left undone: This is our concept of the eternal Father-Mother.

The Mother Is the Active Principle of the Father

Since the Tao is perpetual motion, we can understand that the Tao is Father perpetually becoming Mother and Mother perpetually becoming Father. And as we get on with our terminology, it is



the yang perpetually becoming the yin and the yin perpetually becoming the yang in the great circle of the Tao.

We know the teaching that the Mother is the active principle of the Father in the material universe. And so we understand why Lao Tzu gives us the concept of the Tao as the Great Mother, because that is what we *see* in the Matter universe of the Tao. But when he says the Tao does nothing, he is speaking about the fact that Father is in Spirit and does not act in Matter. So the Tao as Father does nothing. The Tao as Mother does all things.

Continuing with Henricks' commentary, he writes:

The ideal ruler in the *Lao-tzu* is someone who rules in this way. As the Tao is to the ten thousand things the ruler is to his people. The ideal ruler works to make it possible that all of his people will grow to maturity in good health and will feel free to be who or what by nature they are, yet he claims no credit for all that he does. As is said of the ideal ruler at the end of chapter 17: "He completes his tasks and finishes his affairs, / Yet the common people say, 'these things all happened by nature.'"

Henricks' translation of chapter 2 is similar; it reads:

The Sage dwells in nonactive affairs and practices the wordless teaching.

The ten thousand things arise, but he doesn't begin them;
He acts on their behalf, but he doesn't make them dependent;

He accomplishes his tasks, but he doesn't dwell on them.

It is only because he doesn't dwell on them that they therefore do not leave him.

This is nonattachment to the fruit of action—the cardinal teaching of Lord Gautama.

Continuing Henricks' commentary:

One of the things that seems to follow from the analogy of the Tao and the field is that for any individual flower (a) to be what it can be—for a sunflower to realize its “sunfloweriness,” its genetic makeup; and (b) to live out its natural lifespan. . . there is only one requirement that must be met—it must keep its roots firmly planted in the soil.

The soil is the Tao.

But this is precisely what humans do not do. That is to say, Lao-tzu seems to assume that something happens to people as individuals (and to societies as a whole) as they grow up such that as adults they are “uprooted” and have lost touch with the Way. As a result, adults constantly lose sight of who they are by nature and are constantly striving to be someone or something they are not, and they do things that lead them to physical danger and harm. Consequently, if human beings are to be what they are, and what they can be, and live out their natural years free from harm, they must as adults *return* to the Way.

But what exactly does it mean to “return to the Way”? And how does one make that return?

Lao Tzu seems to answer those questions in chapter 14. Henricks’ translation is:

Hold on to the Way of the present—
To manage the things of the present,
And to know the ancient beginning.
This is called the beginning of the thread of the Way.

“Hold on to the Way of the present—to manage the things of the present, and to know the ancient beginning.” You can see that in this style of writing, Lao Tzu gives us all the keys that we need. But we must meditate upon the Word until we go to the seed of the Word, and by our great love cause that seed to open and reveal itself to us. We must work to understand the Tao, but he gives us all we need to understand it.

Lao Tzu Would Have People Return to the Way

Henricks realizes that these questions are not easy to answer, so he simply touches on a few themes in the *Lao-tzu* that seem relevant.

One thing to which Lao-tzu would have people return seems to be a simpler way of life, perhaps one lived with fewer possessions. Lao-tzu and the Taoists clearly recognize that possessions can easily end up “possessing” and that the more one has, the more one has to worry about. As he says in chapter 22, “When you have little, you’ll attain [much]; With much, you’ll be confused.” The ideal in Taoist terms is to “know contentment,” or more literally, “know when you have enough.” . . .

We are told that the Taoist sage values calmness and tranquility and “has few desires” or “lessens his desires.”

Lao Tzu speaks of this in chapter 44:

If your desires are great, you are bound to be extravagant;
If you store much away, you’re bound to lose a great deal.
Therefore, if you know contentment, you’ll not be
disgraced.
If you know when to stop, you’ll suffer no harm.
And in this way you can last a very long time.

Henricks continues:

A second way in which we can understand “return” in the philosophy of Lao-tzu is that he thought the Taoist must literally return to the Tao by achieving mystical union with the Tao—experiencing the oneness of all things in the Tao—and that some form of meditation would lead to this goal. . . . If Lao-tzu and his like practiced and advocated certain types of meditation, for some reason he chose not to elaborate on these. . . . Nonetheless, there certainly are places in the text that seem to allude to and possibly describe meditation and mystical insight. . . .

The opening lines of chapter 16 seem to lay out what must be done with the mind and the senses in meditation and then describe what can be seen by the adept with the mind emptied and the body stilled—the Taoist has insight into the true nature of things, seeing that all things come from and return to the Tao.

Lao Tzu's chapter 16, as translated by Henricks, reads:

Take emptiness to the limit;
 Maintain tranquility in the center.
 The ten thousand things—side-by-side they arise;
 And by this I see their return.
 Things come forth in great numbers;
 Each one returns to its root.
 This is called tranquility.

 If you're one with the Tao, to the end of your days you'll
 suffer no harm.¹⁴

Another chapter that seems to allude to meditation is chapter 56. Therefore we'll read Waley's translation:

Those who know do not speak;
 Those who speak do not know.
 Block the passages,
 Shut the doors,
 Let all sharpness be blunted,
 All tangles untied,
 All glare tempered,
 All dust smoothed.
 This is called the mysterious levelling.

Waley comments on the words "mysterious levelling," saying it is a levelling "in which there is a general perception not effected [that is, not achieved] through particular senses."¹⁵ It is, in other words, a certain knowing, a certain awareness that simply descends.

Henricks' translation of this line is: "This is called Profound Union."¹⁶

To have awareness that does not come by one's senses can only come by a mystical union with the Tao.

Chapter 47 of Henricks' *Te-Tao Ching* says:

No need to leave your door to know the whole world;
No need to peer through your windows to know the
Way of Heaven.

The farther you go, the less you know.
Therefore the Sage knows without going,
Names without seeing,
And completes without doing a thing.

"Finally on the notion of 'return,'" says Henricks,

it seems clear that Lao-tzu wants people as adults to return to some things they all possessed more fully as children—namely genuineness, sincerity, and spontaneity. . . . The important Taoist term *wu-wei* ("nonaction," literally "without action") in one sense *stands* for spontaneity and genuineness: it does not mean literally to do nothing, but rather "to act *without acting*," to spontaneously say and do what is genuinely felt rather than putting on a show for others ("acting").

Thus, at the start of chapter 38 Lao-tzu notes that the truly virtuous person is the one who does the good thing spontaneously, unaware of and unconcerned with the fact that this is what others approve of as "virtue." He says, "The highest virtue is not virtuous; therefore it truly has virtue. The lowest virtue never loses sight of its virtue; therefore it has no true virtue." . . . Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu both talk as though there were a time in the beginning when everyone lived in accord with the Way and no distinctions were made between right and wrong. The Confucian advocacy of certain values—humanity, righteousness, filial piety, loyalty, and propriety—was either the result of or the *cause* of a decline in the Way.

For me this "time in the beginning" was when there was no Good and Evil but only the plus polarity of Good within itself before the Fall—before the descent from the etheric octave, before the

fall from grace or the falling of the Kundalini on the altar of the spine, before duality, dualism, and relative good and evil.

This is a pivotal point in our understanding of the Great Tao. We see the plus/minus polarity of the Father-Mother God as not a duality of good and evil but of the plus/minus factors within the all-good, which is the only reality.

The T'ai Chi provides us with the concept of the masculine and feminine polarity of the Deity, of Alpha and Omega. All life revolves around this yin (feminine or passive) and yang (masculine or active) principle. Within oneness there is always polarity—never duality.

There are some who teach that good is in polarity with evil, and for everything that is good, there must be something bad—a front side and a back side—like something positive and something negative. But this is a worldview of duality, of two-eyed vision. Evil can never be in polarity with good because Good is the Divine Whole and contains within itself the plus and the minus.

This pivotal teaching, therefore, is for us a departure from all of the interpretations and worldviews that take off from the Tao and come down into the concrete terms that we will be discussing later. You need to remember this because if there is an absolute Evil that is in polarity with an absolute Good, then there shall never be the elimination of absolute Evil.

A corollary derived from this is that there is no evil, therefore you cannot judge anything to be evil because it is simply the other side of good. This concept, then, can counteract a sense that there is something that must be neutralized, as Light neutralizes Darkness.

Does Lao Tzu Teach Immortality?

Henricks comments further:

It is evident that life itself is a value in Taoism: To live out one's natural years in peace, contentment, and tranquility is the goal. And Lao-tzu asks at the start of chapter 44, "Fame or your

body—which is more dear? Your body or possessions—which is worth more?” Clearly Lao-tzu sees that in some cases a choice must be made between wealth and fame and one’s life. . . . Lao-tzu would also say, paradoxically, that it is precisely the person who is unconcerned . . . with matters of life and death who stands the best chance of living out his natural years. . . .

While it seems clear that health and long life . . . are two of the benefits enjoyed by the Taoist, is there more? Is there a notion of immortality here?

Later in the Taoist religion, immortality is understood as a physical immortality.

“As a physical immortality.” This delights my soul.

One normally becomes an immortal through a process of “transubstantiation” in which one changes the substance of his or her body from gross, heavy, easily decaying matter into matter that is light, pure, and refined and capable of lasting a long time if not forever.¹⁷

I observe that the ascension process begins with the spiritually refined diet. You might think that this is the very last thing to be considered, but we know that those who are on the heavy diets of the world and are gross in their bodies have no receptivity to spiritual things, whereas those people who have left off the dense foods of the world and of the lower nature and go to less and less animal foods, less substances that are toxic, these begin to attune with the Great Tao and with the Infinite. And so it is true that the ascension process, the very first step, begins with withdrawing from the dense foods of the world.

Progressively more spiritualized in consciousness, the devotee uses mantra and yoga, the violet flame, devotions to the Deity to attain the immortality of the soul. The scriptures state and the ascended masters teach that the soul is not immortal until the soul becomes fused, or bonded, to the living Christ, the Lord Krishna, the buddhic mind.

And so the soul is that portion of self that has descended into the Matter spheres. In order to ascend again, the soul must attain that alchemical union, that spiritual marriage.

It says in scriptures, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”¹⁸ Sinning in that sense means expending the life force until there is nothing left. And so it is the immortality of the soul that we seek, but we must seek it through the “immortality” (and I say that in quotes) of the physical body and the four lower bodies. And I will continue to explain this concept.

The devotee also uses ablutions of the four lower bodies, bathing them in light and the sacred fire, charging them with the sacred breath, partaking of the Body and Blood of the Lord (or Guru), and assimilating the Word until he also should become one with the Word that was with Brahman in the Beginning, in the point of the origin of the Tao. The point of origin of the Tao is my definition of the Beginning.

Thus the negative spirals of Matter in disintegration are reversed by the devotee who so practices. Light charges every atom and cell of being. And the soul weaves and wears her* deathless solar body as she prepares for the ultimate mystical reunion with God in the ritual of the ascension. Although some have ascended physically, most leave behind the physical body and ascend spiritually.

Henricks addresses the question of “spiritual” immortality for the Taoists:

Lao-tzu says nothing straightforwardly and unambiguously about immortality of any kind. . . . Theoretically we could certainly argue that insofar as the Tao is that one reality that existed before all other things and is an eternally existing reality, and insofar as the Taoist in some way becomes one with the Tao during his or her lifetime, that at death the Taoist realizes this oneness in the fullest possible way and enjoys the immortality of the Tao. This is an argument that would see Taoist mysticism

*We use the pronouns *she* and *her* to refer to the soul because each soul, whether housed in a male or a female body, is the feminine counterpart of the masculine Spirit.

as parallel in a sense to the Indian mysticism of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-gita*.¹⁹

Waley, for instance, reads the end of chapter 16 as:

Tao is forever and he that possesses it,
Though his body ceases, is not destroyed.²⁰

Henricks speaks to this by citing Chan's translation:

At the end of chapter 33 of the *Lao-tzu*, we find the line . . .
which Wing-tsit Chan translates as "He who dies but does not
really perish enjoys long life."

I take that to mean, "He who dies but whose soul does not
really perish enjoys long life in the eternal Tao."

Henricks adds:

Importantly, the Ma-wang-tui texts of the *Lao-tzu* do not
have this *wang** ("to perish") in the text but rather the *wang*
that means "to forget." They would appear to say, therefore,
"To die but not be forgotten—that's true long life."²¹

I take that to mean that for this mortal to put off mortality
and to put on immortality is not to be forgotten in the memory of
God. In the memory of God is the recording of the soul that has
become immortal. And that is true long life.

I say, he who cannot be forgotten is made of immortal stuff. He
cannot be forgotten. He is real and everywhere present in the Tao.

The immortality sought and realized by the Taoist is the same
that is or *can be* realized by any lover of God. It is the mystical
union of the soul with the universal Christ and the universal
Buddha. It is the soul's assimilation unto God in the individuality
of the I AM THAT I AM. The soul who fulfills this union steps
forth as an immortal and is henceforth known as an ascended
master or an ascended lady master.

**wang*: "verb"