

THE LONE TRAVELER

Man on the Road to Infinity



Manly P. Hall



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by Manly P. Hall

THE LONE TRAVELER: Man on the Road to Infinity
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MAN ON THE ROAD TO INFINITY

More than thirty years ago, I came into possession of a very interesting and compelling painting. It was brought to this country from China a number of years earlier by a thoughtful and sincere collector. After his passing, it was turned over to me. The previous owner had called this painting "*The Lone Traveler*." It presents an old mystic, or pilgrim, standing on the edge of a cliff, his only companion a rugged tree. He is looking out over a vast expanse of mist and clouds, across a wide valley, and in the distance, above the mist, rise the peaks of mountains. It is a very simple and wonderful expression of the Taoist way of life, which has immediate implications for us. For out of these old paintings and the moods that they inspire, out of the wisdom and gentle thinking of long ago, there may come flashes of inspiration and understanding that we need in this confused and troubled day.

Taoism is founded upon a simple but powerful concept, and this concept has to do with man's acceptance of the eternal values of life, which continue even though they may be obscured by the pressures of any given generation. Man is a traveler, a wanderer. He moves down through history, collectively, as though on a great pilgrimage from somewhere to here, from here to somewhere. The individual learns, in the course of time, that more important than his adjustments to man-made society are his adjustments to this tremendous motion—the motion of space itself. It is better to be a good citizen of space than

it is merely to live under the pressures and adjustment of our material existence. Many people realize this, and they realized it in China twenty-five hundred years ago; but just as we have difficulty making this realization operate in our lives, so they had the same problem.

We observe that man seems to stand still in the midst of a tremendous motion that sweeps around him. Each person, trying to hold his own ground, trying to be permanent in the midst of impermanence, comes finally to violent conflict with the very motions of life. We have to realize that the individual cannot stand still; he cannot be the same yesterday, today, and forever. The person himself must move with the motion of his world.

We are all able to build strong defenses, but the result is that we create fortified cities or towns. These towns do not move. Perhaps they remain in the center of a great culture for a time, but finally, they become only ruins on the outskirts of some forgotten way of life. The more we fortify ourselves, the more we struggle for permanence. We struggle to create a situation that we can depend upon. The individual, in his weakness, wishes for strong defenses around him, but these defenses always crumble.

The truth of the matter is that man's only defense is his ability to adjust, to move with the great motions of realities. Wherever he builds a great fixed structure, he ultimately regrets it, and the institution he fashions finally turn upon him and destroy him.

Lao-tse himself was not only a mystic, but, to a measure, a political figure. He tried to cope with the difficulties of Chinese life on the very practical level of everyday existence. He realized in his own thinking, for example, that strong governments usually result in weak people. The more completely a central administration takes over the powers of a people, the

more rapidly this people becomes dependent not only upon the strength of government, but upon its endurance.

The moment we place our lives into the keeping of a fixed system, our destiny rests with that system. Whatever agitates it, must agitate us; whatever invades it, must invade us; whatever seeks to overthrow it, seeks to overthrow us. Thus we become bound into a system, and this, not being easily changeable and arriving finally at a state of crystallization, ultimately becomes a source of difficulty rather than strength.

Lao-tse therefore strongly advocated what we now would call village government. He felt that the smaller the government unit, the greater would be the probabilities of justice. He felt that the small village, ruled by its elders with a more or less complete autonomy, seeking its own adjustment with other villages, seeking its own growth with a certain peasant-like directness of purpose, might be regarded as having the most desirable type of government. Extending this thinking, the ultimate unit of government is the family, or even the individual. To Lao-tse, therefore, the family required autonomy. It had to be a unit composed of persons working out their own salvation. A family could not be captured in mass psychology by which individual judgment was gradually destroyed.

Lao-tse pointed out, and we know today, that there always countless persons capable of living better than the groups to which they belong. An individual with a high code of morality, a high concept of ethics, and a deep realization of human values, is really capable of a life superior to the general run of his own generation. Yet by circumstances, this person commits himself to his generation. He finds that his virtues come into conflict with popular vices. He discovers that he is out of step with prevailing fashions. He suddenly realizes that in order to be admired, respected, and successful in a certain generation,

he must live according to the code of that generation, and not according to the inner code of his own convictions.

As soon as he begins to compromise what he knows to be right, he begins to destroy his own peace of mind. His conscience does not approve of what he is doing, but he finds it very difficult to escape the pressures which cause him to do these things that he does not really want to do. Little by little, habit, association, and pressure, working upon him destroy his own individuality. Gradually, he becomes a creature of compromise. He relaxes; he gives up; he assumes that it is not possible to battle against the pressures of circumstance. Thus, in time, he becomes one of the offending, although in the beginning he was one of the offended.

Lao-tse realized that there is only one way to counteract this kind of attitude, and that is for the person to come to know that regardless of circumstances, he is still an individual; that his own attitudes and convictions are important; that it is not necessary for anyone to be forced into a condition unreasonable to himself. He does not have to compromise. Lao-tse points out that there are the strongest possible inducements for the person to be himself, and to remain true to himself, in spite of the pressure of conditions.

We look around and we observe a world that is confused and miserable. We know, for example, that every day in this country alone sixty-five thousand persons enter hospitals due to physical ailments. Some will perhaps remain only a few days, and their ailments will be at least corrected; others face uncertainty. But all over the world, human beings are suffering. They are suffering because they are following patterns, moving with mass emotions, and accepting as inevitable the negative forces operating in society.

Lao-tse points out that if we wish to be like other people, if we wish to reduce our own integrities to match the patterns of

our day, then we must be willing to face the inevitable results. If we live like other people, we will perhaps receive their approval for being stylish, but we will also be forced to accept their miseries. We will make the same mistakes that they make and suffer the same pain. So we can choose either to live better than other people, and enjoy greater values, or to live like them, and suffer as they do. Nature does not provide a series of exceptions for this rule.

Lao-tse emphasized very strongly that in spite of the involved way in which we work ourselves into the cultural patterns of our time, each individual is actually always a separate person. He is always alone as far as his own existence is concerned. His contact with all other human beings are comparatively superficial, no matter how intensely he attempts to strengthen these contacts. Even our associations with those we love are essentially associations with stranger. Each of us has his own purposes and his own values. Each person is forever and individual—one against the many.

On this point, Taoism is close to the Buddhist philosophy of India. It points out that all associations with others represent a degree of intellectualism, for our capacity for true knowing relates to ourselves alone. Each individual is capable of knowing only himself. He can have intellectual concepts about others, but he must always interpret them in terms of his own understanding of himself. He *knows* himself; he *thinks* about other people. This thinking about others can, of course, be valuable, and highly commendable, but it can also lead to a series of desperate situations if the person himself is not adequately adjusted.

Each of us, then, is a kind of irresistible force blocked by an immovable object, the immovable object being the world in which we live. Whatever we attempt to do, obstacles rise against it. Whatever pattern we assume, we find an adversary. No matter

how hard we labor, we find the resistance and pressure of time moving in upon us, frustrating our endeavors. Thus, the individual lives to try to accomplish his own purposes in a world made up of hundreds of millions of others trying to do the same thing. The result is confusion, and for this basic confusion there seems to be no immediate remedy.

The only possible way we can extricate ourselves from this confusion is by marked changes in our attitude toward life. If we can change ourselves, we can accomplish the only adjustment possible to us, for it is impossible for us to hope that the whole world will change to meet our attitudes. If, as Lao-tse points out—and the Chinese mystic artists have always deeply appreciated this point of view—we will accept the facts of our relationship with life, we can then begin to build a certain internal value that is more important to us than the applause of the multitudes.

This means accepting ourselves for what we are—travelers in a distant land. We are not actually citizen of this state in which we live. Physically, we may be citizens; morally and spiritually, we are living beings—part of a living universe. Our roots are in space and eternity, not in the earth and time. Our minds, the subtler parts of our own imaginations, break through the boundaries of physical things. We are in this physical world, but we are definitely not *of* it.

We are in this world for some reason. We are *here* for a purpose that rests in the consciousness of the Cause of things. We cannot dogmatize the reason for existence—we can only speculate; but we do have a certain powerful intuitions about it. The wisest and best of people, since the dawn of time, have assumed that we are here to learn something, to grow; that we here to pass a test, or an examination, relating to universal citizenship.

Our life here means something only in terms of an eternal life that is not here. Our adjustments here, the growth that we attain—these things do not culminate here; nor do they lead to any security here. Yet we are very much like the Greek who is said by an old philosopher to have built a business as though he were going to live forever. This is our problem. We built here as though we are going to stay here. We clutch this earthliness to ourselves as though it were our only hope, when in reality, the earth will dissolve us; we will not dissolve the earth.

If we become fanatically addicted to our immediate situation—if our hearts, minds, and labors are all dedicated to today or the plan of tomorrow, or our entire consciousness is invested in the development of some material enterprise—we simply lock ourselves into a situation for which we were not originally intended. Unless we sometime rebel against this, or clear ourselves of this influence, the situation will ultimately close in upon us and bring us to ruin.

Taoism points out very definitely that there is a way of life by which our journey as travelers can be important. This journey can be interesting. It can be a very happy experience—but only if we take the right attitude toward it. Let us imagine that for some reason of business or other immediate purpose, it is necessary for us to visit a foreign land, to make a long trip somewhere. Now, we do not have any particular desire to visit this foreign land, but there are many ways in which we can take advantage of this necessary trip if we will develop an interest in it. Perhaps we can stop off along the way and see other interesting countries; we can make new friends and acquaintances; we can explore unusual ideas. In other words, we can make this trip, which is a business trip, also a cultural adventure.

This, in a sense, is the same problem we face in the journey of life. We are moving here to elsewhere inevitably and continuously. Every day brings us farther along this journey. Yet it is

not necessary that we sigh and say that we are merely waiting for transition, as though that were the only event of significance in life. We have the right and privilege to make a journey that we must make, but we can make this journey just as interesting or just as dull as we want to. We are going to travel; therefore, our problem is to do it as graciously, as wisely, as lovingly, and with as much improvement, pleasure, joy, and advancement to our growth as possible. In this way the journey becomes more pleasant, and what might otherwise be a tedious experience becomes a gracious and important one.

In order to make this journey of life valuable in every sense of the word we must determine, as far as it is possible for us to do, the essential reason for the journey. We must recognize that what we are now is important in terms of our eternal existence. We are not just here today and gone tomorrow for no good reason. We are here with faculties and power to enjoy life. We are here to grow, to be friendly, to cooperate with others along the path of life, and to have a rich experience. *We* are not here to sulk or to shake our fists against Heaven because it is unkind to us.

Thus, we can take any attitude we want along our journey. We can grumble every step from the cradle to the grave, we can resent that we were born, we can wish for death, we can live as badly as we choose; but we are still on that journey. This fact we cannot change, any more than we can change the fact that we are on a little ball of earth making its eternal journey around the sun and, with the sun, around great centers of further space.

Our problem, then, is to try and make this *journey* valuable, and to make it a source of immediate comfort and consolation to consciousness. Now, if we settle down to a dull materialism, the journey is meaningless; but we cannot assume that nature intended this. It is not right or reasonable for man to take the

attitude that life is unimportant. Nature does not waste energy in this way. Nature does not go into the intrinsic process of creating living things only so that these things can bore themselves to death. And if we are unable to grasp this important message, it is time we gave it a lot of definite consideration.

To make life important requires certain effort, a certain understanding of life. Granted, our neighbors do not seem to be making much of importance out of living, and they probably think the same of us. At the same time, however, we know that the superficial kind of world in which we live, with its superficial attitudes and its inadequate cultural concepts, will not give us the encouragement or insight for a valuable life. This has to come out of ourselves. *It* has to come gradually from our own integration, our own conscious understanding of experience.

Lao-tse, in his philosophy, give us a very simple code—namely, man as a being is actually mostly *superphysical*. His body is merely an appendage. Actually, his whole life is an invisible experience. It is invisible in his feelings and thoughts. He can have affections; he cannot see them, but he can express them. He has thoughts; they are all invisible. He has dreams and aspirations that other men cannot see. He lives almost totally within himself, and wherever he does brush against externals, the experience is painful to him.

Thus, with man having such a powerful internal life, this internal life must be ordered. It must be made into a leadership—the only leadership that can actually carry man along the course of his purposes. He cannot attain this leadership entirely on the basis of worldly education; it has to arise from certain maturing insight that develops within his own character.

In mysticism, and particularly in Oriental mysticism, the individual always comes into conflict with concepts that are a little difficult for him to understand. When you tell a person

that he has to remake his own life, that he has to get over the bad habits he has carefully cultivated for years; when you tell him that essential principles of his own temperament, which he has learned to cherish, are wrong; when you point out to him that his miseries are due, in large measure, to his own conduct—he gets very unhappy about the whole situation. He decides to go elsewhere for advice, to someone with a broader point of view.

Actually, the real problem is—how are you going to take a person in midstream and reform him, especially against his own will? He may have a half-hearted wish that he might be better, but when you start to invite him to *be* better, it looks very much to him as though you are asking him to give up everything that he wants, and to be everything that he does not want to be.

The average individual has a very simple code: *he wants to do exactly as he pleases*. Any effort to prevent this is merely to frustrate him. And when you try to tell him that he should change his ways, he will look at you a little hopelessly. Even if he wanted to, he is perfectly aware in himself that he has not the strength to do it; that no matter what happens, he will ultimately fall back into doing the things that he wants to do because that is where his libido is. That is where all his energy is. His energy follows his desires, and his convictions are at best only partly energized.

Lao-tse realized this, and he also realized that nature did not make it miserably difficult to do right and incredibly easy to do wrong. This is a concept that we have, but it is not founded in realities. Compromise is not the easy way. The individual who always does as he pleases is not following the easy course of life, because he is constantly multiplying difficulties that will take all his resources to resolve.

Lao-tse, like all mystics, came to the one grand conclusion that the only way to reform is to relax. Instead of making reformation a stupendous project, the individual has to come finally to the realization that if he will relax into the state of being himself, and will not continue to present false appearances to his own consciousness, he will gradually arrive at the end that he desires. He will realize that adjustment is the easy way, not the difficult way; that this endless process of submitting to impulse the moment it arises in consciousness is not the easy way—it is not even a successful lazy way.

Lao-tse takes the attitude, which I think some day psychology will take, that the abnormal is not the norm; that the individual is not by nature a confused, miserable creature. He has to attain this by careful coaching of his own mistakes. He has to be wrongly educated. He must be indoctrinated continuously with ideas that are not valuable and not right, and he must be pressed on by the force of circumstances, in order to remain miserable. The simple situation that Lao-tse points out is that man is naturally a human being, endowed with those values that will make him a friendly, happy, well-adjusted person.

An individual is not divided between right and wrong, as we commonly think. He does not have to gird on the armor of righteousness and “fight the good fight,” like Christian in *Pilgrim’s Progress*. The trouble with him has been that he has been girding on all kinds of armor since the beginning of time and fighting the wrong fight. He has been much like poor old Don Quixote lancing windmills. This great, desperate, terrible struggle against evil has been magnified out of all proportion by Western theology. We are not born to “fight the devil till the day we die.” We are born simply with a situation that has to be understood; and either we gradually come to understand it, or we suffer.

Assuming that man is naturally good, then it is only necessary for him to be himself in order to be good. We must not change the basic energies in man, but the false concepts that result in the misuse of these energies. Ancient Chinese medicine, for example, assumed that health was normal. Today, we assume that health is abnormal and sickness is normal. In the psychological literature of today, we find books that advance the idea that man needs to have a bad temper; it is important to him. If he does not get angry occasionally, he is going to be sick, says the book. The truth of the matter is that if he is angry often enough, he is going to be sicker. This is not the answer, inasmuch as anger is not good to begin with. Therefore, whatever it produces cannot be ultimately good. Selfishness has never been good, and never will be, although we are being taught today to be successfully selfish. About all we get out of it is ulcers, but we still have a lot of faith in the idea.

Actually, no attitude that is essentially wrong can ever assist the individual to be essentially right; so instead of assuming that it is necessary for us to be abnormal in order to be successful, let us revise this thinking a little, and admit that the principle reward for being abnormal is to be dead before we should be. The only rewards for doing things badly are rewards of pain, misery, and suffering.

Buddha taught this; so did Lao-tse. So instead of taking the attitude that our superficial opinions must be served by the full nature of consciousness, the Chinese mystic was rather simple about the whole thing. He found great consolation in simply re-establishing a contact with nature, with universal realities, and thus making an effort, once more, to break through the little walls of human enterprise and visualize the eternal enterprise with which man is associated.

In Chinese art, therefore, you will find great numbers of paintings of kindly old scholars or poets or philosophers sitting



CHUANG-TZU AND THE BUTTERFLY

in their little cabins on the sides of mountains, or meditating by the bank of a river, or like our Lone Traveler, gazing out along the path of a journey that leads beyond the stars. These elderly gentlemen following good Taoist, and also Buddhist, practice—namely, the realization that man has two patterns of responsibilities, which he must keep at the same time.

One pattern involves those burdens, debts, or obligations which the individual has lawfully contracted in life. If he has raised a family, he must provide for that family; he must do those things that are proper and reasonable. But he must also look out toward the mountains. He must begin to sense his relationship to infinities. He can go out on the side of the hill, sit down and look across the valley, with perhaps a little lake or a river between, with small ships, their sails against a misty

sky; or at night, he can gaze into the heavens lighted by countless flames, and he can gradually begin to allow the universe to move back into his awareness, where it should always have been.

If we were doing this, we could say to ourselves, "As I look out to these stars and I see these lights flaming in the sky, I wonder how much they are concerned with who is assemblyman from the sixth precinct. I wonder if these stars beckon in amazement when we have a special sale of local merchandise; I wonder if there is any place among these stars for bargain hunting." We might wonder also whether these stars twinkle their disapproval if we fail to be extravagant.

These questions we can answer only if we just get out there and relax; and after we have relaxed a little while, perhaps we feel like the Lone Traveler. Perhaps we will realize that we have made a great deal out of things that were not much to start with, and that we have, in this process, lost all the values that we might have found. Values come across bridges of contentment; they are not found in endless discords. Values represent understanding, and the individual actually striving to know more and to feel better.

There is so little time for this in our way of life—yet there is plenty of time to waste. We are confronted today with what may become another major catastrophe in our national life, and that is this incessant determination to cut working hours. Most people want them cut; they would like not to work at all. But as we cut these hours of labor, what do we put in place of this labor? What do we do except give the individual more time for his own discontent? What have we solved? Can we demonstrate that these people who are going to work only five or six hours a day will immediately take those other two hours and use them for self-improvement? Have we any even reasonable hope that this will be true? We will only have more spending

in those hours, because we have associated all pleasure with spending.

These things continue to present us with problems, and as a nation, as families, as individuals, we are not solving these problems. We drift along with them and, of course, our complaints are gradually silenced, as one by one the generation goes to sleep; and the future generation has no opportunity to really receive the benefit of the experience that went before it.

So perhaps we should go out again and sit by the side of the hill and try to work this problem out in terms of our relationship with infinite existence itself. If we do not make some relationship with life and eternity, we are not going to have much pleasure here and now. And sitting there on the side of the mountain, looking out across the vistas of space, certain things can happen to us, and we can begin to understand something of Chinese philosophy.

In the Chinese doctrine, there are two forces constantly operating in space—the *yang* and the *yin*. The *yang* is the principle of continual and eternal bestowal; it is forever giving. The *yin* is forever accepting. Therefore, the life of the individual is a process of learning how to give and how to receive. It is a process of learning how to accept that which descends from superiors, and how in turn to bestow that of which we are and that which we have.

This struggle to accept and to give locks most people in a terrible emergency. We do not understand or appreciate the laws of gracious acceptance and gracious giving. These two principles, instead of being happy expressions of our lives, become problems in our psychic existence. The simple basic rules governing life now hurt us because we have not learned to understand them. We have not learned to obey them or to accept their meaning.

To be a Taoist in our time, then, is to begin to realize that each person is a complete, self-sustaining entity. In spite of pressures, in spite of the high cost of living, our destiny is almost completely in our own hands. This means that each person has to solve his own life, and he must do this in terms of enriching it, of making it useful, valuable, and acceptable to himself. If he is satisfied with a very poor life, then he must expect the consequences of this psychic poverty.

Very few people want to be dull; they simply attain this state by not trying to be anything else. Most people do not really want to complain, yet they find complaint practically their only self-expression. They do not want to be ignorant, but it is very easy to assume that nobody knows anyway; therefore, all effort to learn is a waste of time. One by one, disillusionments move in upon us, until it is difficult to maintain a point of view that is adequate to our psychological requirements.

On this basis we can try to work out a program of life that will make things better for us. First of all, we have to realize that all *inevitables* are unchangeable; that there are factors and forces in life which we cannot change, and which we must learn to accept. In these instances, we follow the *yin* quality. As the earth accepts the light of the sun, so the wise man must accept the light of Heaven. He must acknowledge that these basic acceptances come first in his own consciousness.

Each individual must accept common responsibility with other people, and accept the results of his own action. He lives under a pattern of laws that he must regard as inevitable in his time; therefore, his problem is not to break law, but to live even better than the law requires. But these laws do not have to burden him, because if they are reasonably correct, they also represent processes that he knows to be necessary. Thus he can relax away from a great many of these inconsistencies, and he

can learn to be receptive to inevitables. This in itself is a *great* source of relaxation.

What are the inevitables that we must accept? These inevitables, for example, involve human relationships. Human relationships cannot be enduring. The law of nature does not permit relationships to go on forever. Therefore, *foreverness* cannot, and must not, be the element necessary to happiness. Relationships of individuals are transitory—some more than others. But when we try to cling to that which is gone, we only make ourselves miserable. When we force relationships, we hurt ourselves.

Nature therefore sets up patterns of meeting and departing. We must live by these acceptances. Some of the worst neuroses arise in people who cannot accept changes in relationships. They simply cannot allow a child to grow up; they cannot allow a son to marry according to his own convictions; they cannot allow any of the things that they think make them happy to be changed by the eternal motion of things. Yet everything must change, and happiness arises in the individual who is not unhappy because things change.

If we demand any kind of a basic personal requirement to happiness, we will never be happy. The man who says, "I will be happy when I finish this job," is not happy when the job is done. The individual who says, "When I reach a certain age, I will retire and enjoy myself," finds himself bored to death. The person who says, "When I have my tenth million, I will stop," never stops, and today generally ends up with a federal indictment. There is no rest or end in these things. The individual should not say to himself, "When I get what I want, I will be happy." The man sitting out on the side of the hill says, "When I do exactly what Tao requires, then I will be happy. When I learn to accept life without forcing my own determination

upon it, then I can live; but as long as life has to be exactly what I demand it to be, I cannot be happy and never will be.”

These things apply not only to our possessions, but also to attitudes. A person whose attitudes are not those of generous acceptance, will always be a psychological problem to himself and other people. The moment our attitudes become fixed, they are as dangerous as our possessions. When we develop *attitude-habit* patterns, we create misery for all concerned. And individual who permits suspicion to dominate his thinking, ruins his own life. His suspicions produce nothing for him, because Tao does not want us to be suspicious. If we are jealous, we accomplish the same malignancy in ourselves, because this is not the Way of Heaven. If we are stubborn, this is again not the Way of Heaven.

Heaven is constantly moving, bestowing, and accepting, and we must be the same. If we become too addicted to any policy, if we make too much of our own opinions, if we try to force our notions upon others, if we become locked in orthodoxies or prejudices, we are violating the law of Heaven. For Heaven wants the individual to move graciously, lovingly, and kindly, with deep appreciation for the problems of others, but never, under any condition, attempting to gain his own ends by destroying, disillusioning, or hurting other people.

So wherever man relaxes and accepts life as a beautiful mystery, he beings to experience happiness; but while he remains tension-bound in his own desperate determination to achieve a victory over life, he is in trouble. No one can be victorious over Tao, for Tao is forever the victor. And it is this strange victory that in itself seems so amazing to us.

We look out into the vistas of space, and we do not sense out there some terrible policing power. We do not have the feeling that eternity stands with a blazing sword to cuts us down if we

disobey. This great mystery of things that surrounds us simply fulfills its own purposes quietly. It rises against no man; it turns its hand against no man; it simply goes on its own eternal way—a way that is eternally right. And this law by which it operates is not simply a machine, although it may almost seem to be that at times. This law is infinitely sensitive, tremendously gentle, wise, kind, and at the same time strong.

Most creatures never rise in opposition against this law. We have no evidence whatever that planets resist the laws that govern them. We have no reason to doubt that the sun is adjusted to its own parent cause. Out in space, everything seems to be moving by an acceptance. It does what it is primarily required to do. There do not seem to be any fretful stars or discontented comets. They do things they are fashioned to achieve.

Only man, having the peculiar state of mentation within himself, seems to live in the objective case. He is constantly determined to question, to doubt, to deny. He wishes, for some reason, to impose his own uncertainties upon space. He looks out into this great machinery, and will not rest until he finds both a God and a devil there. He has to make these modifications. He has to assume that there is stress in space because there is stress in himself; but when he relaxes, his own stress ceases, and the space stress fades away.

Taoism is based upon the simple facts that these laws, these basic principles, are adequate and that they protect everything that is created. By these principles, we were created. By the bounty of these principles, we exist. By the tolerance and temperance of these principles, we make our mistakes and still survive. Everything in nature seems to fit into a kindly conspiracy of all things to work together for some vast good that is difficult for us to comprehend. As lone wanderers in this world, we will sometime experience the need to take this quiet view toward life.

Taoism also points out that some activities in life are much more Taoist than others. When we begin to admit that there is in space something gracious and beautiful and wonderful, we also begin to realize that this wonder is in everything that space fashions; that all great and noble works of man and nature are built upon these principles and upon these laws.

Thus, in the cultivation of our internal maturity, we begin to turn our attention from those things that are profitable in the material sense, to those things that are satisfying in terms of soul consciousness. We find that there is much more to be gained from the quiet reading of a good book of poems than from arguing with a neighbor. We realize, also, that the contemplation of a beautiful picture is much more valuable and useful to us than the careful perpetuation of a fragment of choice gossip. We gradually learn the importance of creativity, and find that if we can fashion and make things even if it is only some simple little object—this is better for us than to spend time tearing down the reputation of someone against whom we have developed a strong hatred.

Always in Taoism, creativity, experience of appreciation, acceptance into ourselves of beauty, truth, and graciousness—these things are far more important than the perpetuation of feuds, than grief over loss, fear of the future, or worry about the pressures of the day. If we can find creative outlet, or even contemplative activity, we gain not only a certain mental liberation from our negative habits, but something begins to awaken in us. For out of all beauty, man begins to discover the principle of beauty. Out of the constant contact with the graciousness of great achievement, he begins to realize that the proof of true nobility is that the individual himself is a superior person in the quality of his understanding.

All the way through life, we find tremendous time exhausted in the perpetuation of grievance. Some people cannot get over

their regrets, and live with them for thirty, forty, or fifty years. Others say, "Yes, I can get over my long regrets, but I can't get over my immediate antagonisms." These antagonisms flash up in us, regardless of what our intentions may be. Somebody appears to, or actually does, cause us some injury or some unhappiness, and we feel inevitably impelled to snap back—or we wish that we had, which can be about as bad.

If, however, we have really begun to cultivate an insight into value, we will not feel like doing this. We will try, rather, to understand this other person's difficult relationships with space also. We will learn to appreciate that the individual is his own worst enemy; that it is not necessary for any individual to be an enemy to anyone.

Nature, in its own way, penalizes those who make mistakes, but it does so wisely and seldom beyond the capacity of the person to accept the correction. But when others move in upon nature and try to take over, then everyone is a little the worse for the pressures that result.

I believe that it is perfectly possible to start with small children and point out to them that the most valuable experience of their lives is this experience of being friendly with themselves in their own hearts; this experience of learning to know a little more of life by feeling about life. And as we grow older and problems become a little more stressful, this ability to set aside moments for the quiet contemplation of our place in eternity, becomes more and more important.

Actually, our whole journey through life is aimed at the re-discovery of our true place in space. We must somehow restore ourselves to that lost citizenship of which, according to some scriptures, we were deprived by original sin. Whatever was the cause, man is, in some way, a kind of lost creature. He is lost in an area where there is nothing but God, and this is the strangest part of it. He is not lost on the outskirts of some inferno,

but in the midst of a universe in which nothing can be lost. The only reason he is lost is because he *believes* that he is. He is never any further from eternity or from God than at any other time. Even his mistakes do not take God away from him. Rather, he himself departs from an acceptance of God.

The reason why divine power is not immediately available to all men is only the wall that men themselves build around it. They have not the skill or understanding to simply relax and allow the infinite life that is infinitely here to have its perfect work in them. They build barriers of individuality and personality, of attitudes and purposes and convictions, and then they live behind these walls, trying to shut themselves out from an infinite and inevitable reality. Yet the very energy with which they create the barrier, is itself part of the divine energy which is moving in space.

As a traveler along the way we can see that the road we are walking is merely a road through space. The great values never have become less, but we have created great fronts, or foregrounds, in which we seem to see the near as more important than the great. Little by little, we have locked ourselves into districts and areas, locked ourselves into the problems of real estate and mortgages, but we are still in a world in which values are eternal. We can buy and sell property till the end of time, but the land belongs only to the Lord, and on one else will ever actually own it. Certainly, we can buy it, get a deed for it, and sell it to someone else who will also buy it and get a deed for it and sell it to someone else; but we are never going to own it.

Actually, we cannot even own a painting, or a beautiful flower. We can share with its life, and we may be able to pay a little for more intimate association with that life; we may be able to buy that beautiful painting, and it may be a great joy to us—and as soon as we are dead, our children will sell it because they cannot tolerate it; but regardless of this, it will again be bought

by someone who loves it, and so it will go on in the keeping of people who love it.

But what are they actually buying? They are buying something that can never be theirs—something for which, at best, they can only serve as custodians. That beautiful painting has been bought a hundred times before. It has belonged to a hundred previous owners who have loved it and have passed it on. So we may be one of those owners, but the painting will never belong to us, except in the sense of stewardship. Our great responsibility is to pass it on in as good condition as it came to us.

It is the same with everything in life. We do not own anything; we cannot. Our checkbook can tell us that we seem to own things, but actually, everything in the universe belongs to itself. The earth belongs to the earth; the stars belong to the stars; and the human soul belongs to the human soul; and all these other values that we try to create are like slavery. We try to force our ownership upon other human beings, and it fails. Everything that is false must fail.

We must relax to these things. Whether we own one or ten is not too important. The point is to enjoy the richness of the experience of sharing, or enjoying for a time, that which must always belong to itself—whether it be a painting or our own children. If we get the right attitudes toward these things, our tensions are lowered, and life becomes much easier.

So we can take our pilgrim's staff and start out across the world; and as we travel, we can see either the houses or the towns. We can take the attitude of Plato, who advised men to climb up onto a mountain and look down at the whole village, or we can take the attitude of Aristotle, who thought it was better to walk through the streets and become aware of the intimate things, but perhaps never realize the proportion of the town itself. We can look out upon space and see all the things

that men have built, or we can look out into space and see all those values that were here before men came, and will be here after the last man goes.

We can, if we wish, think of ourselves as builders of destiny, as formers of empires, and then read history and see how our toys fell apart; or we can simply recognize this as a garden, a road, a pleasant place along the way of our journey, where we can pause to refresh ourselves and share in certain pleasures, and then go on. It is much like the caravan routes of ancient Asia—the roads that lead across the mountains and the valleys. These caravan roads existed to enable men to transport merchandise, but they also became the carriers of culture and the custodians of knowledge of the two great worlds separated by deserts and jungles.

We are all on this kind of road, and it is very important that we get a good attitude about it. We must realize that we are never really going to be one with this road, in the sense that we will never really understand it. We will never actually be one with anyone whom we meet along this road. We cannot ever own the flower that grows there. We can pause for a moment and admire it, and carry a memory of beauty as we go on, but we cannot stop. Everywhere, this road leads on. A strange, inevitable pressure forces us to this road, which leads not only to the horizon, but upward and onward *beyond* the stars.

Where this road goes, we do not know, but we are all traveling this road together. In this journey, we have the companionship of an infinite multitude with the same essential and inevitable procedure as ourselves. We are united with everything that lives because it was born as we were, because it is living with the same forces and energies that we have. Therefore, we have many things in common. We also have in common the tremendous conviction that beyond that sleep of death, there is another life.

These things we count upon; we believe them. Yet in the presence of these great values that we have in common, how can we labor continuously in misunderstanding and discord? How can we impose upon each other, exploit each other, commit crimes against each other, when actually we are all simply travelers going from nowhere to nowhere, or from everywhere to everywhere? All of us must make the same journey along a simple road, and each of us, in his own way, is striving to find the answer to that journey, and trying to make the journey as happy and valuable as possible. With these tremendous things in common, why do we not understand each other? Why do we have to wage war? Why do we engage in all these misunderstandings of selfishness and ambition?

Lao-tse was of the opinion that the reason we do all these things is that we have never really learned how to soak up a sunset, or see the beauty of things around us. We have never been able to sit down quietly and love life, and feel in our own hearts a gentle sense of kinship with the bird and the flower. Instead, we have lived this strange, tense, artificial, separated existence which began sometime long ago when we built cities and towns and moved away from the countryside; when we lost that contract with the earth that belonged to our remote agrarian forebears. And with this loss of naturalness, we have also lost health and peace of soul. We live a brittle existence, suffering from day to day, hurting and being hurt, in a universe where none of this is necessary.

So instead of thinking ourselves as peculiar creatures entitled to special privileges, and settling down here as though this were our home for all eternity, let us accept the Taoist symbolism that we are just lone travelers. We can be friendly, and we can have friends, but we are still alone; and in this loneliness, we are seeking a reality which alone can bring peace and comfort to our hearts.

Sometimes a flash of this reality is shared through another person. Perhaps from the words of Lao-tse himself, the thoughtful of a hundred generations will gain inspiration and courage. Perhaps from the simple ministry of Jesus, millions of persons have found a peace that could never otherwise have been theirs. Perhaps we can do something for each other; but all we can really do is give a little hope, a little sense of faith that there is something to find—something worthwhile, something more beautiful than the pressures and sorrows of the day.

When we have this kind of thinking, we will no longer enjoy nagging people, or be happy about the fact that we have had a brilliant victory over some miserable adversary. We will begin to think in terms of the eternal victory of beauty and truth over darkness and ignorance.

As we travel along this road toward that which is beyond, we also envision, in some way, what we think is beyond. We want to know where this Lone Traveler hopes finally to find rest. But perhaps the Lone Traveler is no longer burdened with the concept that heaven must be rest. To us, heaven is rest because we are weary; and we are weary because we are constantly making trouble for ourselves and each other. If we stopped doing this, perhaps we would not get tired. Perhaps the universe is just really full of fun. Perhaps it is a wonderful place where no one really wants to rest except those who have beaten each other to a pulp.

So if we stop doing these things to each other, perhaps we will not want rest anymore. Perhaps it is much more interesting and wonderful to go on and to see the landscapes that lie beyond the present mountains. Perhaps when we get to the stars, we can look out upon still greater fields where we shall see universes spread around us. We do not know exactly what maybe there, but we have a very profound belief that as we get nearer and nearer to the infinite insight, the Infinite Being, the

infinite purpose, we will come to happiness; we will come to peace of soul and peace of heart and mind.

Some believe that when we get there, we will go to sleep forever in infinite consciousness. Others believe that we will keep on knowing forever, according to a new and more wonderful insight; that we will find that in understanding God and life, we come to heaven; that heaven is really understanding, and hell is misunderstanding. In a universe of understanding, perhaps all weariness will vanish, and instead of slowly plodding our way over the mountains, like our Lone Traveler in the picture, we shall float, as it were, from space to space, carried only by the graciousness of our own desire to life and to learn and to grow.

These changes may come; but whatever lies beyond, must also lie above the level of our present understanding. What we are really searching for, is to find the reality of things, to find the presence of God in ourselves, and to find our own place in the infinite plan of things. When we achieve this, then we can obey and keep the Law, and we can accept the truth into our own consciousness and abide by it.

We are far, as yet, from these infinities, and we have other, more immediate, things to do. The most immediate of these is to come into the experience of a gracious, accepting kind of life. In this kind of life, the mere fulfillment of desire that we call happiness, no longer dominates our purposes, for we have found a larger happiness, a greater and deeper one, in fulfilling the desire of truth itself.

Out of our searching, as Lao-tse points out, we come in the end to a universe that is a magnificent, brilliant exposition of the dynamic simplicity of natural goodness. Everything is right; everything is wonderful in its own rightness; and this rightness is as tender as the tiniest thing that lives, and as strong as the motion of cosmos itself.

If we can experience something of this rightness, a little more of it every day, we will gradually come to a good life. We will find that our journey through space is taking us to happiness and peacefulness and to the realization that we live in our Father's house, where there are good laws and infinite wisdom, love, and strength.



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