

Interval 1

Tao Tae Ching

Presented by Roger Weir

Saturday, March 25, 2000

Transcript:

This is the first interval, and this is on *The Tao Te Ching*. And I thought that you would like to see a photograph of Lao Tzu. This is as close as anyone can come to a photograph of Lao Tzu. Well, this is China's greatest artist of the 20th century, Qi Baishi. And he was in his mid 90's here. Lao Tzu of is the most inscrutable figure in world history outside of Jesus. It's almost impossible to approach Lao Tzu in any kind of way with any kind of a preparation. And once, during a classic apocryphal interview Confucius just leaving Lao Tzu said, who can understand the dragon? Who knows the ways of the phoenix?

So, when we come to *The Tao Te Ching*, we come to one of the most peculiar treasures of world history. It's diametrically opposed to the *Bhagavad Gita*, which is equal to it in its profundity. The *Bhagavad Gita* brings together incommensurate that would never go together. Someone once characterized the *Bhagavad Gita* as mixing fire and iron, and only in that molten magma state where it's evaporated into a transcendently hot plasma do you find the vision of the *Gita*. Whereas *The Tao Te Ching* has been together in such an inscrutable way that it never was separated. And the Tao and Tae in *The Tao Te Ching* were never separated in *The Tao Te Ching*.

And it makes it impossible for us to approach this work with any kind of rhetorical language structure. And it makes it impossible for us to make any kind of progress in any kind of logical way. So that our traditional hands, that we have trained ourselves in the vestiges of this civilization that we still find ourselves living in the ruins of. The Western intellectual tradition used the hand of logic and the hand of rhetoric to take things and take them apart. And there's

nothing there in *The Tao Te Ching* for us to either grab or to take apart. There's no way for a rhetorical having of it or of anything, and there's no way to logically take it apart. So that logic and rhetoric are useless before *The Tao Te Ching*. It's like a massive koan in Zen. There's no way to approach it in that way.

But this does not leave us high and dry. It just simply bankrupts the techniques which have been favored by a part of the planet for a couple of thousand years. Outside of that small wedge of pie of the human tradition and condition, is an enormous banquet, a tremendous fertility and nourishing feast, which does not participate with logic and rhetoric, which does not seek to grab and to take apart. And the whole rest of the feast of wisdom is what *The Tao Te Ching* speaks to us and where our sensitivity now needs to shift.

The language of *The Tao Te Ching* is based on a poetic, rather than on a rhetoric or on a logic. It is a different strategy. It's not a strategy of seizing, of having. Nor is it a strategy of taking apart, of separating, and then thinking one can put it back together. There is no mechanical. There is no distributable assemblage for us to have. Or to work with.

The original language of *The Tao Te Ching* is what we would call today a cascade of language. A little more than 5500 characters without any punctuation whatsoever. Just simply a cascade.

In the *Vajrayana* there was the realization at one point where a meditative sophistication had come into play, which the *Vajrayana* had not had before, and it came into play with Milarepa. And after Milarepa there was a new type of lineage, which was a cascade lineage, and it was a secret lineage. Whereas the earlier *Vajrayana* lineages like the Nyingma from Padmanabha or later the Gelugpa from Tsongkhapa. Or the Kagyupa, which usually seeks to subsume Milarepa from Naropa. None of those high dharma lineages could encompass a cascade language. And so Milarepa developed a poetic so that the cascade of language was endless, was infinite and had no discernible beginning.

And so, in order to express that the collection of Milarepa's poems were called the 100,000 Poems of Milarepa. Meaning more than you could ever memorize or address. So that it was an

infinite cascade of language. And that a secret lineage bears no resemblance whatsoever to the Nyingma or the Gelugpa or the [inaudible] but is rather a secret lineage based upon a poetic rather than, as in the Gelugpa it is a rhetoric of debate. Of dialectic.

The Dalai Lama heads a Gelugpa sect which bases itself upon the dialectic of debate. The Gelugpa sect was initiated to facilitate the arguing of points back and forth to a point of, of recognition that this was the best. And that's rhetoric raised to a very high level indeed. It is not a poetic. A poetic has a different strategy.

Nor is it based upon, like the old *Vajrayana*, the original *Vajrayana*, the Nyingma, the old order, the Padmanabha [inaudible] order that you have a points, nodes, from which you begin. And there are many nodes where the beginnings can overlap, and you can have secret texts which you bury the terma and there develop from time to time. And so, you constantly feed new discovered secret texts. And that this somehow is a high wisdom tradition. This is also a rhetorical condition and has limitations beyond belief. The idea that there are secret masters, that there are ascended masters. Who in some Akashic level will from time to time deliver secret understandings and wisdoms when we are ready, is a rhetorical farce in High Dharma. And the Nyingma order in the *Vajrayana* also has its farcical aspect to it. And all of that tradition, the Theosophical conviction that there are secret Akashic records from Ascended masters comes from the Vajrayana. Comes from the Nyingma order. And that comes from Padmanabha [inaudible], who came from India, who brought it with him.

But the origin of that comes from China. It comes from a Daoist tradition from the 4th century, late 4th and early 5th century, of secret texts being buried and being dug up later. And this whole order is all a rhetorical way of trying to hold on to something and then be able to open it up and unfold it to take it apart and somehow that one gains wisdom by doing this. The entire ecology of that approach is specious. There is a tradition that that is the way that Lao Tzu really can be understood, should be understood.

And it goes back to the 2nd century A.D. in China with the *Commentary on the Lao Tzu* by Wang Pei. Who, had he have lived longer than some 20 some years, would have developed a

penetration that he would have put aside these childish things. That there is not a sophisticated way in which a rhetorical strategy and a logical methodology can open up the mystery of nature, so that one then has it and understands how it works. It's just simply doesn't work that way. It doesn't happen.

And there are in Western appreciations of Lao-tzu very few publications like this one. This is *Ho-Shang Kung's Commentary on Lao Tzu* [*The Ho-Shang Kung Commentary on Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching*] from a hundred years before Wang Pei. And it's a real Daoist commentary on Lao Tzu, not a Neo-Confucian type commentary like Wang Pei from a century later. And this particular English translation published in Switzerland in Ascona in 1950.

Why, why would a real Daoist commentary on Lao Tzu be published in Ascona, Switzerland, in 1950. Because in 1950 in Ascona, Switzerland, the Bollingen Foundation saw fit to publish Wilhelm's *I-Ching* in a translation by H.G. Baynes. And her work in England for the Bollingen Foundation, which was largely funded by Mary Mellon in honor of Carl Jung. And Jung held his conferences every year in Ascona, Switzerland. And so, because *The I-Ching* was coming out into an English translation mid-century 1950, they also on the side shunted some money, so that this commentary on the real Lao Tzu commentary on *The Tao Te Ching* could be published in English.

Unfortunately, it's just not available except in very limited editions. This one from about 40 years ago. That I bought in San Francisco when it came out in the late 1950's.

When one comes to Ho-Shang Kung you get an appreciation that there is a mysteriousness of nature that can only be encompassed by a poetic language. And that a poetic language, being an art form, is not a form of integration. An art form is a form of differentiation and not integration. Art is a differential form and belongs to an entirely different order. An entirely different ecology. It belongs to consciousness and not to nature. And this is extremely difficult to appreciate.

And one wonders, are we heading toward some kind of Frankenstein crisis? That consciousness is unnatural. That it's not of nature. And the reply that Lao Tzu has, which is never heard by

people who don't even come through the threshold when it's there. If you bounce off these kinds of situations, you might never hear it again in a thousand years. Because it's rare that these kinds of jewels are shown. Because they're usually not here in this kind of a focus. They're usually at play in the cosmos as a whole. So that this is like a very rare event, extremely rare event.

The sense in Ho-Shang Kung is that Lao Tzu's language is a poetic. And a poetic delivers an art form. And an art form emerges out of a process called we call it today vision. But it used to be called, in ancient times, magic. That Lao Tzu's language is a magic language distinct from a mythic language. And we will see part of our education is to patiently go through and experience a mythic language runs on rollers called images. Whereas a magic language flies because of wings of ratios. And the difference between an image base and a rationality is astronomical. They're both important. They're both very trustworthy in their ways. But images integrate into ideas and Lao Tzu's language does not have images, imagery, to integrate into ideas. He's not concerned at all with the ideas being there. He's concerned with the diffractive differential consciousness of a visionary magic, which comes into ratioed jewel like play when some listener or some reader juxtaposes with the language presented and an art event happens, called appreciation. And that appreciation has a quality of calibration, which is called classically anesthetic.

Whereas a mythic language using imagery to integrate into ideas does not lead to an aesthetic. It leads to a politic. It has a political integration that eventually emerges. And politics and art don't mix. And it takes a tremendous complementarity of structure, almost a cosmos, in order to bring art and politics together. So that they can sit at the same table and eat together. Because they are truly diametrically opposed. The artist is always a revolutionary vis a vis the political situation.

And so, the Daoist tradition in China was always a revolutionary tradition. In fact, to the nth degree. It was a tradition that was not a tradition. It was always an instance of anarchy. And so dynastic China could not countenance these anarchical communities or individuals, and they were always exiled one way or the other, voluntarily, nicely or.

So that when you come to try to approach Lao Tzu, one of the most intelligent works, unfortunately never translated out of French, *The Divinization of Lao Tzu in the Daoism of the Han* that Lao Tzu, *The Tao Te Ching*, has a quality of approaching the mystery of nature almost like a divinization. That there's a divinization that's going on. And what divinization is going on, on the basis of *The I-Ching*. And that *The I-Ching* does not deliver some kind of logical or rhetorical images that make ideas so that you have judgments about what things are and what they do. And almost all the literature, East and West, on both *The I-Ching* and *The Tao Te Ching* are superfluous. They're wonderful fodder to study styles of cultural expression. They reveal more about the age than they do about Lao Tzu, *The Tao Te Ching* or *The I-Ching*. They tell us about fads and fashions. About rhetorical modes that come and go. And about logics. There are many kinds of logic that seem impressive for 5 or 600 years and then seem absolutely fragile. The best, soundest logic of a thousand years ago in the West is scholastic pap compared to our ears today. And yet, Anselm, a thousand years ago in his writings, was the greatest logician on Earth at the time. But his prose slogan doesn't make a damn bit of difference today. You study it in initial classes on logic and philosophy, and you're glad to have the exam and have it over with. You would never live by that. And yet four or 5-or 600-years Europe lived by that.

And yet if you went to someone with a differential consciousness, if you went to someone like Anselm and you want to depreciate the man and his reality, you would set his logic aside and you would go to his poems. And oddly enough, the archetypal scholastic logician had poems, secret poems. He hardly ever showed them to anyone. Even himself. What was so embarrassing about Anselm's poems? Even to himself. Because in his poems he related to a vision of Jesus as his mother. Jesus as a woman. As the mother. Not the Virgin Mary as the mother, Jesus as his mother. And in that poetic one can understand the mystery of the relationality makes poetic sense. But to a scholarly logician, this is very embarrassing.

Most of the books on *The Tao Te Ching* are embarrassing. The libraries in China are full of books, commentaries on *The Tao Te Ching*. They're embarrassing. And the English publications are even worse. There's hardly anything that's worthwhile. And the translations suffer because of a rhetorical bias. Not from some kind of clumsy, uneducated rhetorical bias, but from very

sophisticated, multi-layered scholarly rhetorical biases that sound like logical arguments for excellence and are irrelevant.

And one of the most difficult things for us is to find a comportment to *The Tao Te Ching*, which allows our appreciation to emerge. Not a strategy where language works, but where appreciation emerges. And out of that emergent appreciative milieu, we will disclose to ourselves new words and new phrases and new syntactical styles. We will struggle to find them, to discover them. And in doing so, we will create an individual poetic again. And we will find that that individual poetic has a pair of forms that it always has. It has a lyrical, personal style, and it has an extended style, which in China, in the Chinese literary tradition is called fu. Extended poem of some complication.

Several decades ago, Columbia University was publishing all the great works of the world. And they were making translations of the classic styles of Asian wisdom. And Burton Watson, one of the great translators, published in 1971 two books. They sort of go together. They look very similar. And in fact, they go together. One of them is *Chinese Lyricism;: Shih Poetry From the Second to the Twelfth Century*, and *Chinese rhyme-prose;: Poems in the fu form from the Han and Six Dynasties periods*. So that the Chinese poetic very deeply and very wisely had a pair of forms.

And in the Tang Dynasty, at the apex, as we've been looking at, the Chinese language reached a visionary extent, which has never been surpassed and rarely equaled. And of that visionary magical language of Tang Chinese most of the really great poets cluster around in a single couple of generations. And the two greatest poets are paired together, Li Po and Tu Fu, as almost exact contemporaries. One of them. Li Po develops the fu form to its highest, and the other, Tu Fu develops the lyrical personal poem almost to a [inaudible].

When you look to see what the difference is in a Chinese language, and we're talking about a Chinese poetic, because Lao Tzu is definitely in a poetic but hidden in *The Tao Te Ching* because it is so massively brilliant. It's not just a jewel; it's like a whole royal necklace of all the jewels together. Both Chinese modes of poetry, both aspects of the poetic are brought together.

The individual lyrical voice of Lao Tzu is there, and the extended fu form of his expressiveness is also there. So, you have one of the world's great examples. An example in the West, equaled probably only by Shakespeare and Homer. The personal use of a cosmic language. So that it applies at one and the same time to oneself on the most intimate, conscious way, onto the cosmos as a whole, in every phase, every aspect of it. A consciously personal cosmos emerges, and Lao Tzu has this. And *The Tao Te Ching* expresses it. And it expresses it in a cascade. An unbroken expressiveness in the sense of unbroken by punctuation. Unbroken by any rules of grammar. Any principles of syntax. Any style of rhetorical grouping. And paying absolutely no attention whatsoever to logical method.

So that a magical language does not walk on dialectic feet. It's not interested in debating with anyone. Has what in one of his lighter moments, few lighter moments, Ezra Pound said of the spirit of romance that when she is not happy where she is, she lifts her skirts and runs elsewhere. A magical language is like that. An example of a magical language is a fairy tale. And the lightness of a fairy tale is distinctly conscious. It is a conscious magic. And has in its phase, as Tolkien pointed out, one of the greatest writers of fairy tales of all time. Who wrote a fairy tale in fu form called *Lord of the Rings*. A 1000-page fairy tale. And it pointed out that one of the qualities of a fairy tale is at the very darkest point, where you thought everything was lost, exactly then does everything happen that needs to. And that this sudden shift from the nadir to the zenith happens instantaneously. There is no time element whatsoever, which is why logical form is foregone because there's no time element. And you need a time sequence in order to make a logic stick. Without a time track, there's no way that logical ideation has any place to be. And you cannot have a free form suspended logical syntax. It's not possible. It just doesn't work. And the same or similar I should say not the same, but similar critique applies to rhetorical structures. They simply fall apart because they don't have any way to stay together. They do not have a center. They do not have a hub. They don't have any spokes. And there's no way then to remember.

The rhetorical art of memory was always based on Cicero in *The Art of Memory*. A letter to a friend of his that the book has been preserved. That memory is a completely open wax tablet. And that one can take images and arrange them into egg crate like grids, and that by doing this

sort of thing, one can train and build a memory that is very extensive. And all of this is true as long as you stay within the integral mind. Within an ideational realm. But if you go one step outside of that the entire mnemonic structure dissolves and leaves you where? Leaves you nowhere. Leaves you with a loss of memory. It leaves you without a soul. It leaves you with no sense of identity. And that these conditions happen in a cosmos is like a little clue that maybe you didn't get to the bottom of things. Maybe you didn't get to reality. Maybe you only got to an integral version of what is possible with rhetorical language styling using images and ideas to pull things together. And that maybe, maybe there's a non-strategy of a magical language that doesn't depend on pulling things together but is quite happy to have things go apart. And that the differential spectrum of infinite possibility is a pleasure to such persons, to such beings. Lao Tzu is this kind of person. And *The Tao Te Ching* is this kind of cascade of language. It's a cascade whose harmonic is infinite.

And yet within that. There is still a possibility of conscious disclosure, as long as one reminds oneself that the conscious disclosure is utilizing the integral mythic forms of language to get the ball rolling, and that once it's rolling, that one can just let it fly. So that you can use the integral and the differential together. And when one does so, the best word ever found for this was found by Karl Jaspers one time. And the English translation of the word that Jaspers used is encompassing. He talked about the encompassing. And in his, his disclosure Jaspers showed that it was only in addressing the process of history and historical consciousness, that we come into play in such a way that we need to appreciate the encompassing. And that previous to that the only experience that our species ever had were moments of high magic, high vision, that very few had. And they told us about in mysterious language that very few were able to hear. And Lao Tzu is one of those.

The apocryphal origin of *The Tao Te Ching* is that when he was 200 years old. Meaning, of course, that he was over 100. That he retired from being the archivist, meaning the librarian, of the state, in which he had grown up and lived and worked. And that he rode out to the West. And at this pass, the Hankou Pass, the keeper of the pass asked him to leave some wisdom. And Lao Tzu from the back of a water buffalo gave him an oral cascade of language, which the keeper of the Hankou Pass wrote down, and that that's *The Tao Te Ching*.

Now it's striking that the image of this old man. Where is our, where is our, our old man? Let's bring. Let's bring old Qi Baishi back in. This old man sitting on the back of a water buffalo. It's interesting when Qi Baishi was a young man, he was what was known in China as a buffalo boy. He used to ride water buffaloes because his job as a little boy was to herd the water buffalo. And so, as a little boy, characteristically finding himself riding a water buffalo when he learned about Lao Tzu, the old man on the water buffalo. He got it that he was in that tradition.

Much like some 1500 years from him, before him, one of the greatest of all Chinese poets. His name is Tao Yuanming, sometimes honorifically called Tao Chen. Tao Yuanming used the image of the man riding the water buffalo as the sense of returning back to a deeper reality than the political social scheme that everyone was immersed in. And that he was glad to leave that behind and re-emerge into reality, and that that was his true home. And Tao Yuanming is the origin of the way in which the Chinese Daoist poetic turned into landscape painting, which is one of the great treasures of the Chinese tradition.

Tao Yuanming is the first to bring the poetical language into such a way that it became hidden within landscapes, which began as harmlessly as Tao Yuanming's garden. His little garden plot of vegetables. And over the centuries and after millennia developed in harmonic resonances to the great Northern Sung and Southern Sung landscapes that one sees. Landscape scrolls.

And one of the great figures in that great efflorescence of landscape painters was a Chinese artist whose name is Muqi. And if I can find the painting. Here it is hiding. One of Muqi's most famous paintings *Six Persimmons*. About how to express artistically that something like a persimmon emerges out of the mystery of nature. And that as it emerges, it does not emerge so that it is polarized to its context, but that its emergence, its resonances stay with it all the time. And one says, well, this is fairy tale language. And my reply is, yes it is.

And one of the residences of a persimmon is its fragrance. The resonance of the fragrance of a persimmon surrounds it so that there are like fading persimmons actually around it. And there are all kinds of resonances that are really there.

Tao Chen writes one of his most famous poems. This is translated by A.D. Davis from Cambridge. Just a section of the poem is usually translated as *Coming Home*. He translates it as *Returning Home*. And the deep Daoist sense of this is that one has come back so that the world of the 10,000 things fades back into the Dao without leaving a trace. So that one is home again whole, and all the resonances that accompany one are there with you. So that when you re-emerge, you re-emerge combed of the impurities of the world. Completely fresh and ready for another adventure.

From the great fu poem of Tao Yuanming about 400 A.D.

The three paths have become overgrown. But pines and chrysanthemums remain.
Taking the children by the hand. I enter the house where there is wine filled ready
in the jug. Taking up the jug and cup I pour for myself. A glance at the courtyard
trees makes my face happy. I lean by the southern window in a mood of pride.

And you see this in Chinese landscape scrolls all the time. The scholar at his window, looking out at the landscape. Here's the origin of it.

I pondered the easy content of a narrow sufficiency. My garden daily I pace with
quick step. Although there is a gate, it is always closed. Staff in hand I roam or stop
for rest. At times raise my head and gaze into the distance. Clouds aimlessly come
out from the mountain tops. Birds weary of flying know they should go home. The
sun's light grows dim and is about to sink. Stroking a solitary pine, I linger. Coming
Home.

Take a break.

I want to come back to. There's a point here, which is an idea. It's a very powerful idea, which slides into absurdity without us noticing it. So, I'd like to highlight it by giving a quotation from an old pal of mine, the great science fiction writer Theodore Sturgeon. This was from the January 1964 issue of *If Science Fiction*, and the editorial is entitled *The Day They Threw God at Me*. And he's talking about the war between science and religion and all this prophetic tremor at approaching Armageddon. And he writes these interesting words.

It seems to me that this Armageddon notion springs from a concept which is little more than a little insulting to both camps. Reduced to its simplest terms, it reads knowledge is finite. The rationale would seem to be this, that only God can know everything and do everything. That the more man knows, the closer he gets to knowing it all the more his science does. The closer it gets to doing it all, and that the end product would be an omniscient and omnipotent man who would usurp the place of an omniscient and omnipotent God. Now, if science proves anything at all, it is that both knowledge and power potentials are infinite. The ultimate in either can never be reached. For those who care to believe it, God already has this knowledge and potency. How then, could there possibly be a conflict in the matter.

And that the more that man finds out, the more there is to find out. And so, this bugbear that there is some kind of ultimate, a finite ultimate. And that the closer one would come to that the more omnipotent one would become is like being haunted by Mary Shelley's tale of *Frankenstein*. Which is a wonderful fairy tale and has a social prophecy about it on the integral level. But in terms of the differential, it's just an entertaining story. It doesn't have tremulous substance to it in terms of a danger to us.

We're in an odd condition where we're still on the home planet with all of this capacity. But believe me, once you step out as far as the moon, all of that capacity shrinks to just barely being able to maintain a toehold. And the moon is like the swimming pool outside in the backyard compared to the wide world that's out there. And a lot of perspective will come when we receive the expansion of a star system civilization sometime in the next 200 years. A lot of humility. And there will be generations who are not quite sure that even their tremendous capacities will be up to it.

If that's a phone call from Heaven. I'm not here.

The best things begin small, and I thought I would show you a photograph. This is the initial transistor made in 1947 by Bell Labs. It looks very primitive. And yet we have a trillion-bit computers just around the corner. A bit is a shortened form of a binary digit. A bit is always a

pair. It's a pair of something that moves and something that's open. So that the Tao Tae of a computer system is not logic so much as it is openness and movement.

There was a translation of *The Tao Te Ching* a number of years ago, decades ago, called *Stillness and Movement*. And it's not stillness that's making the mistake that Sturgeon was talking about. Presence is not a static something, it's an open zero infinity. And if one looks carefully with this kind of wisdom at any kind of high school geometry, Euclidean geometry, you'll notice that 2300 years ago in Alexandria, the first axiom of the Pythagorean discipline of geometry is that a locus is a point of no dimension. And when a locus of no dimension develops movement that describes a vector. And the limitation of that vector gives you a segment called a line. No way is it that you have a point, a dot, and that moving that dot then makes a line, and that your conception then is within that dot and that line, and that geometry comes out of. Geometry would never come out of that. The geometrical dimension comes out of this dot. It's Pythagorean and not Aristotelian.

In fact, it goes back not so much to Pythagoras that geometry comes out of Parmenides, the Greek Lao Tzu, Parmenides. And Parmenides in the fragment of his mystical poem about nature, about the disclosure of the mystery of nature. And how when that mystery is disclosed to us, we engender an activity. We engender a movement. We engender a vector. And that that vector actually comes out of the openness. The translation here, given from David Gallop from the University of Toronto Press. Parmenides is saying he's trying to restrain us from considering that the openness, the emptiness, the zero-ness is a thing. That it's a quantifiable quality designated zero and therefore is a number. He's saying,

I restrain you from that route of inquiry. And then also from this one. Another one on which mortals, knowing nothing, wander two headed for helplessness in their breast guides their distracted mind. And they are carried deaf and blind alike, dazed, uncritical in tribes. By whom being and not being have been thought both the same and not the same.

And all of this is a backwards turning path.

In mathematical language, it means a recursive quality enters into the very defective structure of it, and you get caught in a tape loop. And that the tape loop because it is unending is supposed by

the integral mind to be infinite. When it's just really indefinite. And there's nothing indefinite about the cosmos. It really is infinite. And we are at home in that. And this is part of the tradition that *The Tao Te Ching* is encouraging us to appreciate. Not to consider logically. Not to understand rhetorically. But to appreciate poetically.

And when you come to the beginning of *The Tao Te Ching*. When you come to the very beginning of how it happens, the translation needs to take cognizance of the fact that initially when you have the Chinese characters before you. Lao Tzu's beginning of his cascade. Every other character is Dao. So that there's a rhythm established right away. That while you can put a character which definitely says something means something, the first character is Dao, and it presents rather than represents. What does it present? It presents the openness. And the second character presents the vectoring, the movement. And the second character literally translates can. So, the first binary, the first paired bit, of *The Tao Te Ching* is Dao can. Dao can. And the third character is Dao again repeated. So that if one were really paying attention, if one were concentrated, if one were dedicated to the level of a penetrative appreciation of the resonances, you get it that there is an energy wave here of one apex, or one nadir of which is Dao, and the other is a discursive language. So that you have a disclosure language and a discursive language working together, weaving together. Dao. Something discursive. Dao. Something discursive. Dow. Something discursive. So, it sets up the energy wave of the language, which is not in a mythic mode. It's in a magic mode.

And so, *The Tao Te Ching* is the work of magic. Not magic as abracadabra. But notice abracadabra. Notice the vowels repeating rhythmically in that sort of thing. This is like a children's version of something which is radically mature already. But *The Tao Te Ching* is what is radically mature. It's not a hocus pocus. It's a visionary momentum that delivers in a poetic a language which can come back because it's encompassing and not recursive. It comes back to where it comes back, not to the rituals of doing on principles which can be analyzed logically. Which can be characterized rhetorically. But it comes all the way back to nature, which cannot be logically or rhetorically categorized or characterized because nature really has a zero-ness in its mystery that really happens. Or that more precisely, whatever happens emerges out of that. Putting parentheses and quotation marks and asterisks on the that. All we know is that whatever

is has emerged. And from wherever that emergence has occurred, there can be no designation to it. And yet we can say poetically, Dao.

So, *The Tao Te Ching* gets that sine wave going. Dao can. Dao is not. Not the regular negative in Chinese. Not bu. But [inaudible] is not. And as soon as that is posited. As soon as you have the negative, is not, you have a turning. You have like a node that does a pirouette instead of going to its logical opposite, which you would expect as a cue from is not. There's a pirouette and the next character is a, it says eternal. And then the character following that is Dao.

Then you have this interesting juxtaposition, whereas every other character was Dao. Now every other character is Ming, meaning name. The name can. Name is not. Eternal name. So, you have a pirouette that wherever you had Dao, now you have name. And it has the same set of three alternate discursive characters. Three alternate rhythmic words that mean can that mean is not that mean eternal.

So that you're left at the beginning of *The Tao Te Ching* with an interesting matrix. You have a set of two operatives, Dao and name. And they have both disclosed a paired path through can, is not, eternal. And so, when you begin *The Tao Te Ching*, you, you begin in this way and you sensitize yourself, if you're paying attention, that the calibration is a pair of pirouettes that extend from can to eternal without being stopped by an is not.

Now this is the mythic plot turned inside out. A myth begins at some place, goes through some extent, and has an end. Beginning, middle and an end. That's a plot line. Even in Hollywood, it's called a plot. Where does it begin and where does it go? And what happens in between? And you can have a logic based on that. And you can have a rhetoric based on that. But *The Tao Te Ching* is already initially dissolving you of those possibilities and those opportunities in lieu of something else. Dissolving you from that narrow little wedge that we talked about in the first half of this lecture, to enjoy not only the rest of the pie, but to enjoy the rest of the feast. In fact, the rest of the cosmos. It's all nourishing.

Margaret Atwood once wrote a novel entitled *The Edible Woman* that when you understand reality, it's all edible. It's all nourishing. There's nothing that isn't nourishing. Even the emptiness, the zeros, are nourishing. So, we've been given a gift. Not just a gift of life, but a deeper gift. The gift of reality. And so, wisdom is based on the gift of reality. Whereas the tribal expectation mythically is that we hope that we come back. Whereas the, the cosmic form is that it's all encompassing. So, we have plenty of time to make eternal friendships.

The Chinese poetic, as we talked about earlier this morning, had this interesting pair to it. It had a pair where there is a lyric style. And along with that there's like an extended style, almost as we would say glibly in the West an epic style. But it isn't so much epic. It's just that it's extended and has the quality of a journey to it. So, you have the personal poem, the lyric, and you have a journeying sequence where something happens. A quest type episodic scenario. And these two styles are the styles of Chinese poetry.

The lyric style comes from *The Book of Songs* about 1000 B.C. And is characterized by a particular use of four Chinese characters together. So that you have a pair of pairs. You have a square of Chinese characters that work together. And *The Song of Songs* famous for that kind of style. And all the way through Chinese poetry you find those four character groupings of poetic language being able to characterize the personal. And there is a time around Tao Yuanming where appreciation for a fifth character, that you have both the four and the five character groupings of expression. And by the Tang dynasty, the Chinese poetic, and Tu Fu especially, is to have a classic presentation where each poetic line has five characters in it. And that you will have eight such lines so that a poem will have 40 characters. Five times eight. Or you will have a double of that. You have 16 lines of five characters each. So, you have an 80-character poem. And Tu Fu in the Tang Dynasty is famous forever in Chinese literature for making the most fastidious, subtle, personal poems in this form imaginable.

Whereas his counterpart, Li Po, doesn't much go for that particular style of poetic, he goes for the fu style, which is not based on *The Song of Songs*, but is based upon the *Ch'u Tz'u: The Songs of the South, a Chinese Anthology* [*Ch'u Tz'u: The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology*]. The major poet of which Ch'an lived about 300 B.C.

Here's a selection of just a few lines from the Li Po style. The fu style. The extended style. He's writing about the, the mysterious celestial woman. The, the mother of life, but also she who invites the emergence of the real. And in here She is Tianmu the Celestial Mother. Tianmu is also related to Shu Wangmo, who is the Queen mother of the West. In China, the West is always the, the wide open paradisaical wonderland. The, the fairy tale West. The infinite reaches of Western Asia that go into the mystic mystery of the far ends of the Gobi Desert. And who knows out there. And there is where the Queen mother of the West lives. And Shu Wangmo enters into the Chinese consciousness with a tremendous drive in the early part of the Han dynasty.

The greatest of all the Han emperors, Han Wudi about 140 B.C., who extended the Chinese Empire as far as it had ever gone, realized that in the far western extensions, his empire now included a contact with the realm of the Queen mother of the West. So, he sent envoys out to invite her to come and visit him. And there's a famous lake that's north of Turfan, out in the northern part above the Gobi Desert several hundred miles where she was supposed to live. And her vehicle for getting around was a deer. She rode a deer. In ancient times, when her name still had an Iranian root she was called Anahita, and she rode a reindeer. Because she came from a time before there was any civilization. Before there was any Neolithic revolution. She came from Paleolithic times. And Shu Wangmo is a Paleolithic. She's the original Goddess.

Whereas for by the time of Han Wudi, he was convinced that she must magically be alive if she is eternal. She is consciously, magically alive. She can be invited to court. And indeed, the envoys brought back a gift to Han Wudi from the reputed source. And it was a little potted peach tree. And the envoy said, this peach tree contains the possibility of fruiting with magical peaches, and that if you eat one, you will become immortal. But the little footnote said in much smaller characters that you had to whisper in front of Han Wudi, it only blooms once in 3000 years. And it's not blooming now.

So that one of the ancient iconographic typographies of Chinese civilization is that there are people who are like bamboos. People who are like orchids. People who are like chrysanthemums. People who are like plum blossoms. And a fifth came in the, the magical fifth, the fifth business, the transformational kind. And that is the peach people. And more than 2000

years later, in Japanese fairy tales, you find Peach boy Momotarō, who is the child, the immortal child of this kind of gift of life. And so East Asia has these themes that run all the way through it.

The deepest quality is here in Li Po, the selection from one of his Fu's,

Oh, Queen, I must leave you I. But when to return. Upon this green hillside I'll keep
a white deer to ride when the time comes to your glorious peaks. For how can I
drop my glance. Bow my waist to the great. Who will never let me show you my
true heart and true face.

It's full of Daoist mysticism. Because Li Po had the same last name, the family name as Lao Tzu. His family name was Li, Li Er. And surrounding on every side of Li Po was the founder of the Tang Dynasty, whose last name was also Li, Li Shimin. Known in Chinese history as Tang Taizong. Somebody who wrapped up Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar and Napoleon all in the same person. His favorite symbol was the swift fighting war horse like Alexander had Bucephalus. This powerful breed of horse that was both mobile in being able to shift position quickly, but staunch enough that it could take direct hits of swords and lances and not flinch. Well, Tang Taizong had that kind of horse, and when you see the great heart of Tang horses, they are the symbol of Tang Taizong. Of this man who's like the John Wayne of Chinese history. There are whole mythic cycles of him going through the netherworld and all fairy lands and coming out. He's a real hero. And his name, Li Shimin, family name.

And so, the Tang Dynasty was founded with Lao Tzu as its patron. And it went directly in face of the Confucian tradition, which was based on rhetoric and logic. And the Tang dynasty was founded on a poetic. And it lasted for a about a hundred years that way. Before the poetic engendered such a backlog that the Tang Dynasty lineage, the descendants of Tang Taizong ended up into a crisis. For one thing, in the magical world, there is a realization that there's an encompassing quality between men and women. Between the masculine and feminine. That there's an encompassing. Han Wudi and Shu Wangmo would have made the most fabulous pair.

And here, in the ideal of the Tang dynasty, one of the descendants of Tang Taizong is called Meng [inaudible], Meng the Brilliant. He fell in love with the most beautiful woman of the time.

Her name was Yang Guifei. And uncharacteristic to Chinese Confucian history, Chinese dynastic Confucian history. He held his romantic love for her personally above all the other authoritarian responsibilities which a dynastic Confucian based emperor and empire should be run on. And so, his generals took umbrage at this, thinking him to be a soft soap patsy, and insisted that he kill her. Otherwise, they would displace him as emperor. And what ensued is called in Chinese history the An Lushan Rebellion, named for the head general. China had a population of 51 million people. 17 million died before that was over.

And so, the whole Tang Daoist tradition hit the wall of the authoritarian, hierarchical dynastic society that saw all of this poetic as so much froufrou, la la land, cloud dreaming stuff. And we've got to get rid of these kinds of people. And so, you have in Chinese history, ever after that, you have a polarizing of this kind of equality.

But in *The Tao Te Ching*, this is a long time before that. And in *The Tao Te Ching*, you find the taproot of where this entire tradition that finally surfaced at its apex in the Tang some 1200 years later. There's as much distance between Tang Taizong and Lao Tzu as there is between myself and *Beowulf*. The huge tradition where the language kept getting more and more refined and true than Li Po's poetry is so exquisite that you can spend a whole lifetime just being able to appreciate the encompassing range of the nuance. Unbelievable. Like an E.E. Cummings and a Shelley merged together. Incredible capacity. As if E.E. Cummings would have written *Prometheus Unbound*.

So that when we come to this. My translation of *The Tao Te Ching*. This is how I translate the beginning, where every other word is Dao, and then it pirouettes, and every other word is name. “Dao causing quote Dao is not eternal Dao. Name causing quote name isn't an eternal name. None having name is Heaven Earth beginning. Name is the 10,000 things mother.”

Notice that in a pair, mother and beginning. There is such a thing as a mother and we'll see when we get to myth that one of the archetypal characteristics of a plot is that it involves people who have mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters. In other words, it has a family quality. Even the Gods have families. Especially the Gods have families. So that a mythology

always has this kind of familial, image-based ecology to it. There's always somewhere a Zeus or an Odin who's having problems with Hera or Thor or Freyja. And there's always these complications. And the complications always end up that the resolution of those complications is like a guideline for us. So that there are mythic models of how to handle these image complications, and that the relationalities are the linking together of these images into these patterns. And so, there are such things as mythic patterns. And when you take a mythic pattern and integrate it, it's just a few brisk, abstract steps before you get an idea.

And so based upon, as we will see, based upon the experience, the feeling toned experience, in our lives, which has an imagery and has a familial kind of a structure, it's very easy for us if we're egotistic and identify with that ego, to assume that we are woven into that pattern, and therefore that idea contains us. And that's the whole basis of any ideology, is that you believe that to be the case. Whereas Lao Tzu shows quite wonderfully again and again in almost every section, that there's no basis for an ideology to have reality. All of that is just a fabric of fictitiousness, which is only true to the extent that someone or some people accept it. And other than that, it's just hardly doesn't even stay around. It vanishes, as in evaporate.

And so, after the Tang crisis of An Lushan, *The Tao Te Ching* was dynamite, and it was held in such deep, suspicious regard by the authorities that many of the achievements of Daoist meditation were limited to the monasteries. They put Daoism into monasteries. You stay in your monastery. Like the White Clouds Monastery in the western hills outside of Beijing. Goes, survives even to this day. Made it through all the revolutions and made it through everything. My friend [inaudible] received, he was the first American to ever receive a degree, a Daoist degree from the White Cloud Monastery. But the whole point is that the Dao doesn't belong in monasteries. It's a foreign thing. In fact, it's an aping of that Buddhist ideal that there should be a [inaudible] of not participating in life. Men who do not marry, who do not have families, who do not have relationalities of love. And this is very convenient for authoritarian structures that don't want to bring any of this romantic quality of inter relationality becoming encompassing because it will dissolve their power base. As they used to say sure as hell.

So that there is equality of incredibleness to *The Tao Te Ching* in Chinese history. It's both the ace classic and the most watched over cultivated captive. It's not good to let people learn enough to read this without logical filters and without rhetorical constraints. Because what happens is that they become free. And not only that, but they infect others around them with their freedom. And pretty soon you have a free population. And then what are they going to do? No one knows. They'll do whatever they are interested in.

And this in fact happened towards the very end of the Tang about, I think it was in our dating about 848 A.D. One of the ploys that happened is that the Buddhist monasteries became so rich they were left all these inheritances. And so populous, because all the young men wanted to join the Buddhist monasteries, because it was a great life. And in 848 the Buddhists were sharply curtailed by dynastic powers. Hundreds of thousands of men were turned out of the monkhood. Many things were destroyed because they had been receptive as caretakers to most of the wealth of dynastic China by the end of the Tang.

When we come to *The Tao Te Ching*, then, it's very difficult to find anybody, East or west, who has ever been able to translate *The Tao Te Ching* as it is without all of these screens. There was a book published by Princeton a couple of years ago called *The Uses of The I-Ching in the Sung Dynasty* [*Sung Dynasty Uses of the I Ching*]. And one could have written the same thing about *The Tao Te Ching*. These books are used and have been used many, many hundreds of times. And the use has become very refined by groups and individuals for purposes other than disclosure.

So here is a translation of one of the most interesting sections of *The Tao Te Ching*. It translates as *Empty Heart*. It's a section 21. When you come to and I'm using here this translation of *The Tao Te Ching*. It reads by Doctor Paul Karas. Paul Karas was a German man who went to Chicago at its heyday in the 1890's and set up a school. But the translation is actually by D.T. Suzuki, the great Zen master. When he was about 21 years of age. And in the back there's a transliteration of the word for character showing D.T. Suzuki, even at 21, D.T. Suzuki was really somebody. His rōshi [inaudible] made sure that he didn't go to America unless he had had a dissolving samadhi. And he told the young D.T. Suzuki, you cannot go to Chicago until you've

had this samadhi, and if you don't, then you'll have to kill yourself. And within a day of having to kill himself, D.T. Suzuki, finally, at 21, had this profound penetrative samadhi. And he at, when he was dying at 96, he wrote a little memoir about how, at that age he came out of the zendo, and he was startled to see that all the trees were transparent. And he looked down and he saw that he was transparent also. And that's when his Zen master let him go to Chicago. And he made this translation. And he translates the beginning of 21, *Emptiness of Heart*, “Vast Tae Chi” translates that as virtue. Tae is the complement to Tao. As Tao is a zero, Tae is always a unity. It's always one. so that whenever Tae is operative, Tae is completely operative. Its unity is always evident. And it always is in binary set paired-ness with Dao.

“Emptiness of heart. Vast virtues manner will exactly Dao thus follow.” In other words, and here's the translation I made, “Vast Tae’s presencing mode is exactly Dao.” So that the Tae the unity in its movement, in its vectoring, when you get to its presence, that's Dao. But the presence is not a stasis, but it's hidden within. But when you pull what is hidden within out, it now has just as Dao was hidden within the Tae. And when you invite poetically Dao to emerge from the Tae that Dao contains within itself Tae.

And in the Chinese tradition from the time of Tao Yuanming, he used a poetic simile of poetry and painting. That within painting was poetry. And within poetry was painting. And made the same correlation, the same encompassing relationship between poetry and painting. So that when Tao Chen, Tao Yuanming, wrote landscape poems, it was only a little while before they began to be artists who made landscapes that had this kind of Dao quality to them for the very first time in China, The very first Chinese landscape painter [inaudible] made a painting of the river Goddesses the mountains and rivers without end, and the Goddess es who are the presence of those rivers without end. And that was the beginning of Chinese landscape painting. And when you look at the development of landscape painting, by the time of the Tang Dynasty, it just becomes almost nascent. It took that long for it to accumulate a kind of a tapas. But by the beginning of the Sung dynasty, a couple of hundred years later, you have Chinese landscapes that are like the wonder of the world.

Empty Heart translates in this way,

Vast Tae's presencing mode is exactly Dao. Thus, to follow Dao in a presence of active nature is exactly abstruse. Exactly elusive. Elusive, oh, abstruse. The inside has forms. Abstruse. Oh! Inside floating a deep being. Oh, obscure. Oh, an inside where spirits are very real. This inside has our trust from ancients to us such never departs. Witness to all. Recurring. On what basis can presence no such reoccurrence. By veracities own being.

And so, there's a recursion. There's an encompassing. But an encompassing that doesn't just include, it interchanges. So that encompassing is a transformative action.

And we'll find that the ancient wisdom of ritual always founded itself on exchange flows like this. Why? Because that was the only way that men and women could make sure that they were participating in the mystery of nature and thus be real. To do rituals right is not to be enslaved to detail. It's to make sure that you get as close as you can to that ribbon of eternal flow that nature itself invites in us. The rhythm is the rhythm of the drum.

And we'll start next week with the first pair in ritual; *Black Elk Speaks* and the *Sandpaintings of the Navajo shooting chant* Gladys Reichard's great study. It took women anthropologists to actually go and become personal with the tribes so that the tribes invited them to be with them. Because the masculine anthropologists wanted to go and study a subject, whereas the women wanted to go and be with the people. And Gladys Reichard was one of the greatest.

So Black Elk from the Oglala Sioux and his visions about how the rituals occur and how they come out of the mystery of nature. And the Navajo sandpaintings of the shooting chant, one of the great mythic cycles that makes the rituals of the American Indians danceable. The rituals are not just doable, they're danceable because they have a rhythm. Why? Because nature's mystery has an energy, that's why.

More next week.

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