

The Greatest Change *part 1*

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In 2006, I started watching a television show called *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. In the show, four elements are “bent” to the will of the bender. Each bending style is inspired by one of China’s great martial arts: Bāguàzhǎng, Tàijíquán, Húng Gā kung fu, and Northern Shaolin (Běishàolín) kung fu. This interested me, so I searched the Web for information on these martial arts.

The first page I came across was for Bāguàzhǎng*, the style of Airbenders. Within the Wikipedia page were references to Taoism, which led me to a search for a good *Tao Te Ching* translation. The principles that I had gleaned from my web searching—compassion, humility, discipline—felt authentic and compelled me to learn more. This differed from other religious and philosophical texts I had read, which spoke of impending doom, severe mortal punishment, or the myriad ways to be banished to Hell. There was also a large focus on dogma, to believe blindly without questioning. The *Tao Te Ching* felt like an opportunity to explore something positive in philosophy and maybe walk away a little wiser. The focus on self-improvement and positively influencing the world was refreshing. So it was decided: “Let’s check out this book.”



最重大的改變（上）

◎ 中譯 詹蕙靜 鄭名翔

從 2006 年起，我開始看一部電視節目「降世神通：最後的氣宗」；在「降世神通」的故事裡，氣功宗主以意念掌控著 4 種元素的神功；4 種神功的靈感各自源於八卦掌、太極拳、洪家拳，以及北少林功夫等 4 種偉大的中國武術。這引起了我的興趣，因此上網搜尋了與這些武術相關的資料。

我看到的第一個頁面是關於八卦掌（註）——截氣神功的武術原型。在維基百科的網頁中，有許多道家學說的參考資料，也因此觸動我去搜尋好的《道德經》譯本。從搜尋到的網頁中，找到了一些道的要旨，包括同理心、謙遜及紀律；這幾項原則，令人感覺真實，驅使我繼續一探究竟。這跟我之前閱讀過的其他宗教及哲學的文章不同——那些文章談的是末日將近、嚴厲的天譴，或是無數下地獄的方式，以及常常強調絕對盲從且不准有疑。這本《道德經》好像提供了一個機會，讓我能夠在哲學裡面探索正能量，或許也變得稍有智慧。它聚焦在自我改善，及正向地影響世界的觀點，非常提振人心。因此我下定決心：「翻開這本書吧！」



Finding the Book

Eventually, I found a translation by Derek Lin, someone who I felt was honest in his approach to teaching philosophy. Before getting to the first chapter, Derek lays out the process he took in creating the translation. He explains his methodology, the difficulties of capturing the same concise beauty of the original, and why he chose to put footnotes on the opposite page of each chapter. This level of craftsmanship is part of what attracted me to the book. As a complete outsider at the time, the commentary gave me a much-needed perspective on the text that other translations didn't appear to have. Also included is an invitation to join the community on Taoism.net, its online meetings, and the forum. This was a welcome surprise to me, and I would later join after finishing my first reading of the book.

Joining the Community

I joined the forum in 2007. That time was tumultuous for me, rife with personal difficulties, romantic troubles, and poor decision-making. In reading the *Tao Te Ching* and discussing it with others on the Tea House forum, I gained some much-needed perspective on my life. Since I was new, I gravitated toward the easier lessons: things I could apply immediately and see the results. Chapter 76—dealing with flexibility—was particularly useful to me. Another chapter, exposing the relationship between space and substance, taught me how space and substance interacted in my own life. Other concepts—like “pú” and “wū wéi”—were also interesting, but I wasn't ready for them. This is an important part to keep in mind, because nobody runs a marathon on the day they learn to walk. The smaller lessons help one learn how to apply the Tao, which gives the learner momentum and insight to the energies of their path. That momentum ripples throughout your life and can bring you to the other lessons, if you are disciplined and sincere.

找到書籍

我終於找到一本 Derek Lin（林信价講師）所翻譯的譯本，我覺得他引導哲學理念的方式頗坦率。在進入第一章之前，Derek 闡述如何完成這本翻譯著作，並說明所使用的方法，以及為了能夠抓住原文言簡意賅的美感，所遭遇到的困難，還解釋了他為何要在各個章節的隔頁放置註解的原因。這種程度的編輯技巧是這本書吸引我的原因之一。當時的我還是一個門外漢，這些註解提供了非常必要的觀點，而這些在別的譯本中似乎都看不到。在「Taoism.net」上，我也看到線上開班及論壇的邀請，這讓我十分驚喜，我在第一次看完這本書後就加入了！

加入論壇

我在 2007 年的時候加入論壇。這個時期的我活在混亂之中，日子充斥著個人困境、感情問題，以及不恰當的決策。透過閱讀《道德經》，並與「Tea House 論壇」的網友探討經典內容，我得到了一些對人生很有幫助的看法。因為我是個初學者，所以傾向從較容易懂的章節開始閱讀：那些能夠馬上應用到日常並看到結果的道理。例如第 76 章〈柔弱章〉——談到柔韌性——對我來說就特別受用。另一個章節，則揭露了距離與本質間的關係，讓我了解到這兩者在我的生活中如何互相影響。書中的其他觀念，譬如「樸」及「無為」，也很有意思，只是我還沒能好好地體會。這是一項很重要的準則，必須牢記在腦中，因為沒有人在學會走路的那天，就去跑馬拉松。書中的小啟示也幫助我們學習運用「道」，因此在讀者的修行路上，提供他們繼續前進的動力及洞察力。如果能夠好好修煉，且真誠以對，這個動力將會帶給你的人生不小的漣漪，並帶你走向下一段里程。

I faltered in that discipline from time to time, and ignored advice, as can be expected from a younger person. I let my ego get between me and my spiritual and personal goals. I allowed others to control my emotions. In doing so, I brought a lot of pain on myself. Even when I acted in this way, the Tea House members and the Tao itself didn't change; they were still receptive, compassionate, and concerned. That's when I learned about unattached compassion, given freely. It was very humbling; I felt almost ashamed. It wasn't due to anyone's actions or words but my own, however. The Tea House was always there, encouraging me to apply what I learned, to share my story with others, and set a good example for those around me. I was unaware then, but I was being taught how to **live the Tao** instead of simply studying it. Knowledge is useless if it's not applied to become wisdom.

Over time, I would write articles concerning the Tao in my own voice. I'd focus, again, on concepts that were immediately understandable to a reader and could be applied for noticeable outcomes: encouraging one to tidy their home and free it of items they won't use or enjoy, arguing that homosexuality is *not* against the Tao, and expressing the binary system of computers as a sort of "technological Tao". The articles served as a way for me to test my understanding of the Tao and spread a positive or inspirational message.

Some of these articles were picked up by independent journals. It was humbling and exciting to have my words published by another entity. I wasn't paid for any of these articles or their publishing; I was happy getting the message out and hoping that someone, somewhere would transform their life for the better as a result of my work. I was inspired by the stories and transformations of others, so it only felt right to share my understanding as well. The Tao wants to be shared!

我在修煉過程中曾數次動搖，甚至對於建議聽而不聞，就像個年輕人一樣；我任由自我意識橫阻在自己和靈性目標及個人目標之間，我把自己情緒的掌控權交給他人，也因為這種種作為，帶給自身無比的痛苦。就算我的行為如此，Tea House 的成員們及「道」本身卻從未改變，他們依然接受我、富有同情心，也依然掛念我。在那時候，我學習到無分別的關心，以及毫無保留的奉獻。讓我自慚形穢，甚至覺得丟臉，不過不是因為任何人的行為或話語，而是因為我自己的行徑。Tea House 永遠在那裡，鼓勵我運用所學，鼓勵我分享自己的故事，並成為周遭人的模範。當時我對此渾然未覺，但我一直被教導要如何「活在道中」，而非僅僅是學習「道」而已。知識如果沒有運用並轉化成智慧，就是無用的。

一段時間之後，我用自己的方式，寫出對道的感受。文章仍舊著重在讀者易於理解，且能夠有顯著成果的概念上，像是：鼓勵人們整理他們的家，並拋棄那些他們不會再使用或不好用的物品；辯證同性戀是不違反道的；將電腦的二進位系統，解釋為一種「科技上的道」。這些文章可以作為測試我對道的理解的一種方法，同時也傳遞了正面或鼓舞人心的訊息。

這些文章有幾篇被獨立刊物挑選上。我的文章竟然出版了！真令人不好意思，但又興奮呢！我不曾收取這些文章的稿費或出版費。我很高興這些訊息能夠被傳遞出去，且希望在世界某處的某個人，能夠因為我的文字而改善他的人生。我曾被別人的故事與改變所激勵，所以我知道分享對「道」的領悟是正確的。因為「道」，就是要分享的。

The Invitation

Let's fast forward a little bit, to May 2017. Over the years I had developed a friendship with Derek, and he knew I was interested in pursuing I-Kuan Tao initiation. He informed me that Master Chen of the El Monte, California temple was coming to my region soon for other initiations, and asked if I'd be able to attend. After ironing out some details, the plans were made. Along the way, we discussed a vegetarian diet, which we'll get to later. Let's establish some back story.

Throughout 2016, I found myself stressed and addicted to energy drinks, my father died prematurely, and my cat died, who had been my primary companion for fifteen years. When I broke this news to others on the Tea House to explain my absence, Derek reached out to me and asked about my health. A simple expression of concern meant so much to me in my time of grief; it motivated me to try to take care of myself. It was a wake-up call, and this time I listened.

The energy drinks were dropped, immediately. I don't recall telling anyone I had found myself in that rut again, but it was clear my current path wasn't working for me. Over the past four years, I had gained 60 pounds. I hurt all the time, and work politics were severely affecting my mental and financial well-being. All of this in the wake of two deaths in the family felt like I was being punished for something. "What did I do to deserve so much misery? Did I have a hand in my cat's death?" Even in grief, my ego remained stubborn and angry. Self-pity and stress clouded my judgment. I wasn't giving myself the slack I needed to recover and bring order to my life again. This part of the story is relevant, because if I hadn't started to look at my choices and correct them (again), I might not have felt motivated to attend initiation. That was an important goal for me—to connect with other cultivators in person, learn more of the culture, and formally receive the Tao.

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baguazhang>

(To Be Continued)

邀請

讓我們將時間快轉到 2017 年 5 月。我已和 Derek 建立了多年的友誼，他知道我有意願要求道。他告訴我加州埃爾蒙特全真道院的陳正夫點傳師最近會來我們這區（西雅圖）辦道，並詢問我是否能來求道。在解決了一些細節問題後，計畫敲定了。整個過程中，我們討論到素食，待會兒我們還會再談這部分，先讓我們回顧一下我的背景故事。

整個 2016 年，我被壓力擊垮，對能量飲料上癮，加上我父親的驟逝，且陪伴我 15 年的貓也過世了。當我向 Tea House 上的夥伴透露這些訊息，解釋我缺席的原因時，Derek 朝我伸出了援手，並詢問了我的身體狀況。雖然這只是簡單地表達關懷，但對當時在人生低谷的我，卻意義重大，讓我開始努力照顧自己。這是一個警訊，而此次我聽進去了。

我馬上戒掉了能量飲料，之後也從未再跟任何人提起那段不堪的歲月，但很明顯當時所走的路並不適合我。在過去 4 年裡，我胖了 60 磅（約 27 公斤），無時無刻都感受到疼痛，而且公司中的勾心鬥角嚴重影響了我的精神與財務。一切種種，就在兩位家族成員過世之後，讓我覺得好像是因為什麼而被懲罰。「我做了什麼事需要承受這麼多的不幸？是我造成貓咪的死亡嗎？」就算在悲痛的情緒中，我的自我依然固執而憤怒；自憐及壓力蒙蔽了我的判斷力。我沒有給自己足夠的放鬆時間，以回復生活中該有的秩序。這段過程和我的故事是相互關聯的，因為如果我沒有回頭去審視所做過的選擇，並再做修正，我不會有求道的動機。這對我來說是個重要的目標——面對面地與其他道親聯繫互動，多了解道場文化，並正式求道。

註：<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baguazhang>

（續下期）