

# The Way and its Adepts:

a partial, slightly jive recasting of Stephen Mitchel's Tao te Ching

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overwrite &  
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1

Can you say it? Yeah?

Then it ain't the real deal.

Give it a name, and it changes.

The forever name is unknowable.

The never named is the always.

Calling names is how we make passing things.

Let loose from wanting, you arrive at the true riddle.

When we want, we can only see things we might get.

The riddle, though, and all the things we might get, come from one and the same.

They come from the big blank.

A blank filled in with a blank.

That's the way in.

If we go around calling certain things pretty, we make other things plain.  
Call one thing good, well, another turns bad.

'To be' and 'not to be' give birth to one another.  
'Rough and tough' and 'easy peasy' prop each other up.  
Look 'long' up in the dictionary and it'll say 'not short'.  
'Up top' needs 'down low' in order to make any sense.  
'Prior' chases 'subsequent' like a cop after a perp.

Adepts know this shit. They have got it going on.  
That's why they do without doing and say without saying.  
Labels pop up, and they let them pop up.  
Labels drop away, and they let them drop away.  
They have good and plenty, but don't really feel like they own any of it.  
When they take action, they do so without expectations.  
When they're finished with something, they put it out of their minds.  
And that's why their works are eternal.

When we put a few winners up on a pedestal, the rest of us become losers.

When we think nice things are the end all be all, some of us commence to thieving.

Adepts help people by taking out their mental trash and stocking their inner pantries.

They simultaneously sap the go-get-em and fire up the can-do.

They help people turn loose of the delusion of knowing and the affliction of wanting.

They mess with the heads of those who insist that they know.

To be an Adept, just work on doing by doing nothing. All the rest kicks in from there.

4

The Way is a spring-fed well. We draw from it without ever emptying it out.

It's just like the space between the stars and planets and all... full of what could be there.

We see nothing there, but The Way is there.

Where can it have come from?

It came before God.

The Way plays all sides of the table.

Good... evil... both emerge from The Way.

That's why Adepts take 'em as they come.

Adepts can accommodate do-gooders and ne'er-do-wells alike.

The Way is like one of those accordion gadgets that we squeeze at a fire to make it burn better.

There's nothing in it, but it's awfully useful.

Work it and work it... it just becomes all the more useful.

But when we pile words on it, we lose sight of what it is.

It's best to stick to the axle of the wheel, so as not to get spun silly.

6

The Way is a womb – THE womb.  
Roomy yet cozy, it is indefatigable.  
Its offspring are innumerable.

We've all got it in us, always.  
We can use it as we see fit.

The Way is bigger than the biggest and lasts longer than forever.

It's longer-lasting than forever because it wasn't hatched and won't kick the bucket.

It's bigger than the biggest because it doesn't pick and choose, so it's there for all and then some.

Adepts lag to the back. Thus, they are at the forefront.

They don't hold onto things, so things are just a part of them.

They let go of notions of themselves, and are therefore whole.



Good (with a capital G) is a nutritious fluid. It flows and fills and nurtures just by its nature. It likes bottoms and way-downs which most people fear and hate. In these qualities, Good is akin to The Way.

Here's some advice, for what it's worth:

Camp on dirt.

Think simple.

When disagreements crop up, try to keep level-headed and don't be afraid to give ground.

When it's time to guide others, try not to be too controlling.

Make work play.

With family, be there all the way.

When we're merely ourselves, without comparing ourselves with others or vying to be better than they are... that's when we get respect.

Tip the jug to the cup and fill 'er all the way up and that's when some's bound to spill.

Take the stone to the blade too long and it'll go beyond sharp to dull.

While we run around panting after more and more cash and a no-risk nook, our hearts stay all balled up like fists.

When all we care about is what people think of us, we slam the cell door on ourselves and give them the key.

Best to do the deed, then back up off it.

That's how to have some peace of mind.

How about bringing the mind home from its gadding about and resting it on the source?

How about allowing the body to feel soft and spry as a little kid's?

How about directing the gaze of the old inner eye onto light and only light?

How about loving and guiding effortlessly and with no masterplan?

How about letting affairs sort themselves out, even the ones that matter the most?

How about giving thinking a rest and thereby getting a glimpse of true comprehension?

Creating and fostering, having without owning, doing without demanding, guiding without imposing...

There's virtue.

A wheel's got spokes and stuff, but it's the hole in the hub that makes it work.

A jug might be made of crockery or whatnot, but the absence inside is what serves the purpose.

We might make our house out of cut tree bones, but we live in the box-shaped hole in the middle.

When 'to be' is what we build with, 'not to be' is that which proves most useful to us.

So much color! We cannot see.  
So much sound! We cannot hear.  
So much flavor! We cannot taste.  
So many thoughts! We cannot think.  
So much wanting! We cannot feel.

Adepts have eyes. They take a gander at what's around. Yet they rely on inner sight.  
They can take it and leave it – let it ebb and flow.  
Their tickers are as deep and as wide as the high blue above.

Getting it right can be just as hairy as getting it wrong.

Optimism can ring as empty as dread.

How can getting it right be just as sketchy as getting it wrong?

Well...

Whether we go up a rung or down a rung, the ladder shudders.

It's when our kicks are ground-bound that we know balance.

How can optimism echo hollow as dread?

Well...

Both optimism and dread are specters, shadow ghosts cast by notions of who we are.

Let go of those notions and what is there to be optimistic about or to dread?

A few facts to be taken with the proverbial grain of salt:

Each of us is the whole shebang – all that is.

When we trust the universe, we find faith in ourselves.

When we love the universe as we love ourselves, we have compassion for each and every bit of it.

We point our eyeballs at it and see it not.

We aim out ears at it and hear nothing.

Our fingers and thumbs can't get a grip.

Up ain't sunny.

Down ain't shady.

Unbroken, name-proof, it circles ever back to the big blank.

Shape with all shapes in it, picture of nothing, real sly, it outfoxes all knowing of it.

We come at it from in front and find no head on it.

We come at it from the rear. No tail to speak of.

We cannot conceive of it, yet it we can be, at peace in our own skin.

When we get where we're from, we know wisdom.

Them old Adepts was deep and slippery.  
Man, were they wise. It defies description.  
All we've got to go on is how they acted.

They were wary as walkers on very thin ice.  
Keen as a kill-or-be-killed cat.  
Well-mannered as a humble houseguest.  
Slick as ice on a hot day.  
Ready to be sculpted as a block of soft wood.  
Willing to receive as a steep-sloped slough.  
Lucent as pure water in a tall thin clear glass.

Why not bide time 'til all silt settles and full clarity takes hold?  
Why not sit still while the proper course of events comes to pass?

Adepts don't go looking for wholeness.  
Neither questing nor anticipating, they merely fully are, and so have the ability to embrace all.



Clear away the mental clutter.

Permit inner serenity.

Observe pell-mell people; wait for them to chill (as they inevitably will).

Every person eventually settles back down to the source.

Coming home to the source is peace.

While we stray from the source, we may be muddled and morose.

Back at the source, we are easy-going, mild, ticklish, warm as a mom's mom to her grandbaby, all with a king's knee-jerk dignity.

Saturated with awe of The Way, we can handle anything life has to offer us, and when death arrives, we let him in before we hear the knock of his knucklebones on our door.

People barely notice Adepts when they guide them. This is the most preferable guidance there is.

Next most preferable is a guide people love.

Next is one people fear.

Least preferable is a hated one.

When we treat people with mistrust, they lose their trustworthiness.

Adepts don't say, they do.

When the deed is done, people say, "Right on! Look what we did without even any help!"

Leave The Way by the wayside and guess what pops up – dutiful morality.

Let common-sense slip and here come wit and intellect.

In families without harmony, forced respect reigns.

Nations in chaos are the most patriotic.

What if we ditched righteousness and correctness? Wouldn't morale get a shot in the arm?

What if we scrapped restrictive laws and political correctness? Wouldn't people naturally behave themselves?

What if we shitcanned corporate profiteering and the rape of the land? Would there be any robbers left?

If we tried all that and none of it worked, hell, we'd just stick to the axle and let it ride.

Let's stop thinking and watch our problems fall away.

What matters yes or no?

What matters success or failure?

We need not hold high that which is held high by the masses, need not run from what everybody else seems to be running from.

It's absurd!

Lots of folks are all worked up like they're at a damn party.

Only we could give a care less about anything.

Only we wear faces flat as pancakes, like babies' faces before they learn to smile.

Lots of folks have got everything they feel they need.

Only we ain't got a pot to piss in.

Only we roam around like the homeless.

It's like we're stupid, with our minds this blank.

Lots of folks shine.

Only we are dim.

Lots of folks are quick-witted.

Only we are slow.

Lots of folks know what they want.

Only we are not driven.

We roll like the swells of the sea.

We loft willy-nilly as fickle breezes.

We ain't like most folks.

We suckle at the nipple of The Way.

Adepts maintain oneness with The Way.

They glow with it.

The Way is beyond understanding, so how can they be one with it?

They don't need concepts.

The Way is blank and bottomless, so how can it make them glow?

They allow it to.

Before whats and whens was and is The Way.

The Way is not governed by 'to be' and 'not to be'.

How can Adepts know the truth of this?

They look inward and recognize the same.

Seeking wholeness, we first become fragmented.

Seeking true alignment, we first get bent.

Seeking fulfillment, we become hollow.

Seeking rebirth, we expire.

Seeking all, we forsake all.

By dwelling within The Way, Adepts illuminate the path.

They don't show off, so folks can follow their glow.

They don't insist, so folks believe them.

They aren't self-centered, so folks look at them and see themselves.

They aren't goal-oriented, so they meet with success at every turn.

When them old Adepts said, "Seeking all, forsake all," they weren't blowing smoke.

It is only when The Way lives within us that we can really be our full, true selves.

We say all, then shut our traps.

We are weather: wind so gusty, nothing else matters; rain so hard, it overwhelms the senses; and when the storm is through, here comes the sun.

When we invite The Way in, we become one with The Way and are The Way.

When we cultivate insight, insight enters us, and we are insightful.

When we embrace loss, we are loss and are able to bear it.

If we invite The Way in and have faith in our instincts, all else will follow naturally.



Reaching for the stars, we teeter and sway.

Sprinting, we flag with a quickness.

Striving to be bright, we dim ourselves.

Accepting labels, we lose who we are.

Exercising authority, we lack real power.

Obsessing over our labors, we fail to produce lasting results.

In order to attain oneness with The Way, we do the work, then release.

Without shape, beyond time, is a permanent blankness.

Only and always its limitless self, it gives birth to all.

Why not call it The Way?

It waxes, drenching and saturating everything, then wanes back to the source.

The Way.

The universe.

The planet Earth.

Humanity.

The four of these are the music.

Humanity jams to the beat of the planet Earth.

The planet Earth grooves to the universe.

The universe keeps time by The Way.

The Way simply plays.

In weight, heaviness enables lightness.

In motion, the more still provides a framework for all movement.

Adepts can go everywhere while remaining at rest.

Grand sights don't wow them, because they are at home in themselves.

Being at home anywhere and everywhere, Adepts feel little need to roam.

Chasing the wind, we may misplace our foundations.

Wanderlust may cost us knowledge of ourselves.

The best of travelers is without itinerary.

The master artist trusts his gut in the moment.

The successful scientist harbors no expectations.

Similarly, Adepts are accessible to all, rejecting none.

They are prepared for any happenstance.

This is being The Way.