

Pooh: the master of flow



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Within this current day and age, people of the world have a distinct inability to relax; with an abundance of things to do, places to see, and technology to use, stressful lifestyles thrive. Individuals often find themselves struggling desperately to attain control over every aspect of their lives, which generally places them further from their goals in the end. In order to rid oneself of these petty problems, one must connect with their inner Pooh. Benjamin Hoff, in his book *The Tao of Pooh*, uses Winnie the Pooh and other illustrations to describe Taoism. He tells how a true Taoist flows with the characteristics of Wu Wei, knows the experience of life to be sweet, and views the world and themselves as un-carved blocks.

With so many ups and downs, it may seem difficult to define life as anything other than unpredictable. However, as Hoff explains the bases of Taoism, the experiences of life are what make it sweet, not the events themselves. He begins by comparing the three teachings of Asia with a painting called *The Vinegar Tasters*. The picture depicts K'ung Fu-tse, Buddha, and Lao-tse trying the Vinegar; “ The first has a sour look on his face, the second wears a bitter expression, but the third man is smiling”(Hoff 3). The reference depicts the Taoist view on life. Whilst the others showed disconnected with the taste of the bitter liquid, Lao-tse smiled in recognition of the unique experience. Hoff continues on to explain that “ The basic Taoism that we are concerned with here is simply a particular way of appreciating, learning from, and working with whatever happens in everyday life”(Hoff 5). The philosophy does not force the view that everything in the world is positive, for there will be times on both sides of the spectrum. Instead, it promotes the importance

of experience; whether a good or a bad time, insightful lessons can be found within any sort of experience.

In order for life to be viewed as truly sweet, it must be looked at as an un-carved block, from the perspective of an un-carved block. Again, Pooh is used as an example of this very point. “ Pooh looked at his two paws. He knew that one of them was the right, and he knew that when you had decided which one of them was the right, then the other one was the left” (Hoff 12). Hoff uses Pooh’s state of being ambidextrous to portray him as an un-carved block. Pooh has gone through his entire life without assigning a dominant hand. With this action alone, he proves to be in a state of complete balance. Apart from living an even life, Pooh approaches situations with the mind of a Taoist. He uses his simplistic logic to get his friends and himself out of the forest, meanwhile any other attempt to escape lead them right back to the pit where they started. “ I thought that if we looked for this pit, we’d be sure not to find it, which would be a good thing, because then we might find something that we weren’t looking for, which might be just what we were looking for, really”(Hoff 13). Seeing the repeated results as they attempted to find their home and merely went in circles, Pooh realized that the only logical thing to do was to look for the pit. This mirrors the idea in Taoism that depicts how one must pay attention to natural patterns in order to understand the working of nature.

Once an individual is familiar with the flow of the world around them, they are able to relax and let the current take them. Hoff uses the example of an old man that came out of raging rapids completely unharmed. The old man explains his method; “ I go down with the water and come up with the water.

I follow it and forget myself. I survived because I don't struggle against the water's Superior power. That's all"(Hoff 69). This example shows that fighting against the current of the river will only bring harm. The same goes when it comes to going through life, a natural flow of situations make for an easy ride if they are followed, or a difficult time if they are not. These situations often reveal themselves as the easiest and most straightforward route. " When you work with Wu Wei, you put the round peg in the round hole and the square peg in the square hole. No stress, no struggle"(Hoff 75). Often times people attempt to find more within a predicament, making the problem more difficult than it should be. With the teachings of Taoism, Wu Wei represents the natural flow, showing how the obvious aspects of life should be capitalized on in order to meet the least resistance.

Within the pages of The Tao of Pooh, Hoff is able to use a relatable childhood character and metaphorical examples to convey the beliefs and workings of Taoism to his readers. He shows how Pooh is able to view life as being sweet, looking at it as a simple ride that he can jump on. Looking at things as their natural state of being, Pooh is able to follow the easiest road as he relaxes for the ride.