

The thoughts of tao te ching



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The first thing that struck me about Tao Te Ching is Albert Einstein. I am a big fan of Einstein, perplexed by years of studying his scientific theories and thereafter forever being awed by his genius. As for Taoism, being of Chinese descent, growing up in the eastern world, I have constant exposure to the Taoist practices, culture, traditions, images and symbols. However, the irony is that I had never ventured further than just being a mere observer, a classic case of not seeing the forest for the trees.

When I began to read Tao Te Ching, I am intrigued by the concept of Tao and its similarities to scientific theories, Einstein's theories and thoughts, in particular. In Chapter 1 of the Tao Te Ching, it tells me that the real Tao is not an entity and cannot be described in words or named. All that could be named are just illusions or mere manifestations as stated in chapter 1, "Naming is the origin of all particular things" and another line, "Caught in desire, you can see only the manifestations".

The "mystery" which is the "unnamable Tao" is reality as stated in this sentence, "The unnamable is the eternally real". Then, it goes on to say that, "Yet mystery and manifestations arise from the same source". I would interpret this as reality and illusion are both the same. Here, I draw similarity to Einstein's quote "Reality is merely an illusion albeit a very persistent one". Chapter 2 reads to me as Einstein's Theory of Relativity. It says that what is defined as beautiful is possible only when compared to what is ugly.

Likewise, what is ugly is only definable compared to what is beautiful. It gives other examples of paradoxical unity. Often what we see is relative to another that opposes: good and bad; being and non-being; difficult and easy; long and short; high and low; before and after. To me, it means that what we

can see as real is defined by comparing to something that is opposite, without which, neither exists. One entity is relative to another. This is exactly what Einstein says in his Theory of Relativity. He says to imagine a passenger sitting in a high speed train which is really going smoothly, and looking out through the windows. The trees will appear to be moving, rushing by and the passenger does not feel that the train is moving. To an observer standing on the platform, the same train appears as speeding by, not the trees. Who is correct? Einstein says both are true. He goes on to explain that if a high speed train is travelling very smoothly and the windows are completely closed, the passengers inside could not tell whether they are moving. This is the part of the Einstein's theory that is the basis of his famous formula of $E=MC^2$ which I find parallel to that of another line of this chapter which reads, " Therefore the Master acts without doing anything and teaches without saying anything. " My interpretation of this is " Tao" advocates concentrating on ' contradictions' or " relativity" as the basis of reality and it is also the Master's recommendation as the principle that governs the world. In other words, everything is interconnected and does not exist without each other, as there is no black without white; no short without long; and no being without non-being.

Everything exists as relative to another just as Einstein said so. This interconnectedness and mutual existence appears to me as a key idea of Tao. I understand Tao to be not an entity or something tangible that we can grasp on. We can only know of its manifestations in Nature, in relation to one another – relativity. Through Tao, one can see that everything on earth and

in the Universe is intertwined in a harmonious balance. One cannot survive without the other, just like a perfect ecosystem.

It follows that a person who has wisdom or has Tao will not resist or try to control nature. He is at “ One” with nature. I find this concept of “ At One” and connectivity expressed in many chapters such as: Chapter 23 – be like the forces of nature, open yourself to Tao, you are at one with the Tao; Chapter 42 – but the Master makes use of it,...he is one with the whole universe and; Chapter 51 – Every being in the universe is an expression of the Tao.

Last but not least, I find the best expression of my understanding of Tao in Chapter 39: “ In harmony with the Tao, the sky is clear and spacious, the earth is solid and full, all creature flourish together, content with the way they are, endlessly repeating themselves, endlessly renewed. When man interferes with the Tao, the sky becomes filthy, the earth becomes depleted, the equilibrium crumbles, and creatures become extinct. ”