



# Tao Te Ching: Lao Tzu's Timeless Classic for Today

*David Tuffley*

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## **Tao Te Ching: Lao Tzu's Timeless Classic for Today** David Tuffley

The Tao Te Ching is a how-to guide for creating harmony in your life. It can transform you, heal you, make you into the person you were always meant to be by teaching you about your true nature. It describes a force called the Tao that operates uniformly throughout the universe and is the causal agent of everything that happens. This edition begins with a discussion on knowing the Tao. With this foundation, it goes on to discuss how to use the Tao to become more conscious, to cultivate yourself, to lead others, to influence group dynamics, and when to refrain from action. Central Idea A central idea in the Tao Te Ching is the importance of avoiding extremes and always seeking the middle path on our journey through life. The objective is to operate from the middle ground between the extremes. This avoids causing any counter-reactions to your own actions. The net effect is one of neutrality. Finding the middle path means not needing to suffer the consequences of an act. In terms of the doctrine of Karma, it means avoiding negative reactions, or bad karma. Harmony with the Tao means living so that we do not swing like a pendulum from one extreme to the other. In human terms this pendulum swing equates to drama, that which creates disturbances in our lives and gets in the way of calm inner reflection. The Tao Te Ching encourages us to sense the world around us directly and to contemplate our impressions deeply from a position of neutrality. It advises against relying on the structures and orthodox belief systems that have been created by others. Such ideologies remove us from a direct experience of life and effectively cut us off from our intuition. Finding and following the Middle Path requires you to develop an awareness of the physical forces that shape your world and direct its events. Such forces operate uniformly at all levels, from the macrocosm to the microcosm. They operate in the universe as a whole and in the minds and lives of individuals. An understanding of these natural laws and the forces they direct gives you the power to direct events in the world without resorting to force, by using attitude instead of action. Subtle influence is better than force Influence on others is achieved through guiding rather than ruling. The objective is always to avoid taking action that will elicit counter-reactions. In Nature, an excessive force in a particular direction tends to trigger the growth of an opposing force. Therefore the use of force cannot be the basis for establishing an enduring social condition. Accepting the inevitability of change When you come to know the Tao, you understand that everything in the universe is in a state of flux. The emotional and intellectual structures that you build for your comfort and security will be subject to change by external forces that are largely beyond our control. The challenge is to accept the inevitability of change. We should not waste our energies propping up what one day must surely fall, defending them against criticisms, and convincing others to believe so that they are recognized as permanent truth. Grasping the reality of the impermanence allows us to align ourselves with the forces of Nature that bring about incremental progress in the social and physical world. We learn to embrace change whenever it occurs. Becoming a force of Nature Our alignment with the forces in Nature makes us a part of those forces, gives us the momentum of those larger forces. Our perceptions become more finely tuned because they are now based on evolving reality, not upon orthodox thinking that may be out-of-date. We see the world as it is, not as we believe it should be. Finding and following the Middle Path is how to create peace and tranquility in your life. A person whose life is chaotic, lurching from one disaster to the next, is unable do much more than merely survive.

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