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The Tao Is Perfect And This Is My Last College Essay So I Will Say It Like It Is

In the introduction to *Desolation Angels* by Jack Kerouac, Joyce Johnson recalls a fragment of a conversation between the two authors, which Kerouac jotted down in pencil. It read, “Somebody told me that W.C. Handy had just died — I said, ‘He was never even born’ — ‘Oh you,’ she said.”

This note is a fantastic example of how the Tao works in reality. One attempts to describe the Tao, one chastises the describer; one is seriously playful, one is playfully serious. Both think they know anything, and both are in the Tao. Example: I am writing this paper about the Tao.

“Yes, this is the Tao,” I write, and this is how it works.

Oh you! “I say.”

See, it doesn’t really matter how it is perceived

or who is saying it

or with what words or stylization. What is perceived? The Tao. Who perceives it? The Tao. This is enough to live free.

...And then we go on living, seemingly not-free. Why?

Kerouac writes,

“And I buy Buddha, who said... ‘Your trip was long, illimitable, you came to this raindrop called your life, and call it *yours* — we have purposed that you vow to be awakened — whether in a million lifetimes you disregard this Kingly Heeding, it’s still a raindrop in the sea and who’s disturbed and what is time—? This Bright Ocean of Infinitude sails many fish afar, that come and go like the sparkle on your lake, mind, but dive into the rectangular white blaze of this thought now: You have been assigned to wake up, this is the golden eternity, which knowledge will do you no earthly good for earth’s not pith, a crystal myth...” (22)

As Kerouac succinctly describes, there is no you or yours. You! are the illusion, as in, your body, mind, thinking processes, desires, and even the desire to be free from the illusion, and as such, time doesn’t exist because it is perceived by You! and disruption doesn’t exist, because it happens to You! In fact the Kingly Heeding doesn’t exist, because You! cannot possibly be separate from the Tao, you’ve already gone all the way across the great ocean of existence and so have I and here we are. Oh!

“I think therefore I am not.”

Verse 51 tells us a little more about the “trip” Kerouac’s Buddha mentions. It says, “Every being in the universe is an expression of the Tao. It springs into existence, unconscious, perfect, free, takes on a physical body, lets circumstances complete it...” (51). We are born into this world carrying a hidden secret, “hidden but always present.” (4). The secret is

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It seems our “reality” is governed by the Tao according to our understanding of it. If we fully understand the Tao, it is perfect. If we cannot comprehend the Tao, feeling lost and disillusioned, it is perfect. This can be extrapolated to the perfection of everything, for “the great Tao flows everywhere” (34). How do we do this?

In verse 7, we are taught how: “The Master stays behind, that is why she is ahead. She is detached from all things, that is why she is one with them. Because she has let go of herself, she is perfectly fulfilled” (7). My personal approach to this has been to find purposeful, conscious joy in my own disillusionment, misunderstanding, and suffering. If I read a line of the *Tao Te Ching*, and I do not understand it,

Ahhh!

Alternatively, if something happens in my life which I do not understand, or doesn’t seem fair, or doesn’t fit into my preconceived worldview,

Ahhh!

What does it mean if I don’t understand it? It means the same as if I did, so I move right through it. Then it suddenly makes sense, and I end up giggling like a baby. Heehee!

Take Kerouac’s word for it: “Take my word for it, something will come of it, and it will wear the face of sweet nothingness, flappy leaf—“ (22). What the hell does flappy leaf mean? It’s just different a way to say it, this unsayable; a different way to dig away at the layers of facade that shade the ever-present, ever-awake, ever-always. Once, I said this atop Pine Mountain, looking out at the vast empty, and it meant something. Here it is again:

Ahhh... Hum!

Works Cited

Buddha

Joyce Johnsen

Jack Kerouac

Jack Kerouac's Buddha

The Tao

Um.....