

Benjamin Hoff (1982) **The Tao of Pooh** ... in which The Way is revealed by the Bear of Little Brain. Illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard. Mandarin, London

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*That Sort of Bear*



We were discussing the "Ode to Joy," the choral finale to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

"It's one of my favorites," said Pooh.

"Same here," I said.

"My favorite part," said Pooh, "is where they go:

*Sing Ho! for the life of a Bear!"*

"But—"

*"Sing Ho! for a Bear!*

*Sing Ho! for a Pooh!"*

"But they don't—"

*"Sing Ho! for the life of a Bear!"*

"My favorite part," he added.

"But they don't sing, 'Sing Ho, for the life of a Bear!' in the 'Ode to Joy,' " I said.

"They don't?"

"No, they don't.

"Why not?"

"Well, because they hadn't *thought* of it, I guess."

"They *what*?"

"Neither Ludwig van Beethoven nor the man who wrote the words of the 'Ode to Joy' put anything in it about Bears."

"Oh. I must have been thinking of Ludwig van *Bear*thoven."

"Pooh, there is no Ludwig van *Bear*thoven. You wrote that song yourself."

"I did?"

"That's right."

"Oh, so *that's* where I heard it," he said.

But anyway, that brings us to what we're going to discuss here—enjoying life and being Special. Everyone is Special, you know.

"It is hard to be brave,' said Piglet, sniffing slightly, "when you're only a Very Small Animal."

Rabbit, who had begun to write very busily, looked up and said:

"It is because you are a very small animal that you will be Useful in the adventure before us."

Piglet was so excited at the idea of being Useful that he forgot to be frightened any more, and when Rabbit went on to say that Kangas were only Fierce during the winter months, being at other times of an Affectionate Disposition, he could hardly sit still, he was so eager to begin being useful at once.

"What about me?" said Pooh sadly. "I suppose *I* shan't be useful?"

"Never mind, Pooh," said Piglet comfortingly. "Another time perhaps."

"Without Pooh," said Rabbit solemnly as he sharpened his pencil, "the adventure would be impossible."

"Oh!" said Piglet, and tried not to look disappointed. But Pooh went into a corner of the room and said proudly to himself, "Impossible without Me! *That* sort of Bear."

No matter how Useful we may be, sometimes it takes us a while to recognize our own value. This can be illustrated by the Chinese story of The Stonecutter:

There was once a stonecutter, who was dissatisfied with himself and with his position in life.

One day, he passed a wealthy merchants house, and through the open gateway, saw many fine possessions and important visitors. "How powerful that merchant must be!" thought the stonecutter. He became very envious, and wished that he could be like the merchant. Then he would no longer have to live the life of a mere stonecutter.

To his great surprise, he suddenly became the merchant, enjoying more luxuries and power than he had ever dreamed of, envied and detested by those less wealthy than himself. But soon a high official passed by, carried in a sedan chair, accompanied by attendants, and escorted by soldiers beating

gongs. Everyone, no matter how wealthy, had to bow low before the procession. "How powerful that official is!" he thought. "I wish that *I* could be a high official!"

Then he became the high official, carried everywhere in his embroidered sedan chair, feared and hated by the people all around, who had to bow down before him as he passed. It was a hot summer day, and the official felt very uncomfortable in the sticky sedan chair. He looked up at the sun. It shone proudly in the sky, unaffected by his presence. "How powerful the sun is!" he thought. "I wish that *I* could be the sun!"

Then he became the sun, shining fiercely down on everyone, scorching the fields, cursed by the farmers and laborers. But a huge black cloud moved between him and the earth, so that his light could no longer shine on everything below. "How powerful that storm cloud is!" he thought. "I wish that *I* could be a cloud!"

Then he became the cloud, flooding the fields and villages, shouted at by everyone. But soon he found that he was being pushed away by some great force, and realized that it was the wind. "How powerful it is!" he thought. "I wish that *I* could be the wind!"

Then he became the wind, blowing tiles off the roofs of houses, uprooting trees, hated and feared by all below him. But after a while, he ran up against something that would not move, no matter how forcefully he blew against it a huge, towering stone. "How powerful that stone is!" he thought. "I wish that *I* could be a stone!"

Then he became the stone, more powerful than anything else on earth. But as he stood there, he heard the sound of a hammer pounding a chisel into the solid rock, and felt himself being changed. "What could be more powerful than I, the stone?" he thought. He looked down and saw far below him the figure of a stonecutter.

Ah, here's the mail. "Oh, look—something for you, Pooh."

"For *me*?" said Pooh.

"For Mister Pooh Bear."

"*Mister* Pooh Bear?"

"That's what it says."

"Mister ... Pooh ... Bear," said Pooh in an awed sort of voice. "What's it say?" he asked, climbing onto the writing table and looking over my shoulder.

"It's from Finenley's. 'Announcing our third annual shoe sale. All styles, all sizes.' Pooh, you don't need this."

"What's that say at the bottom?" asked Pooh.

"'Free Coffee.' One more reason to stay away."

"Let me examine this more carefully," said Pooh, taking it over by the window.

In order to take control of our lives and accomplish something of lasting value, sooner or later we need to learn to Believe. We don't need to shift our responsibilities onto the shoulders of some deified Spiritual Superman, or sit around and wait for Fate to come knocking at the door. We simply need to

believe in the power that's within us, and use it. When we do that, and stop imitating others and competing against them, things begin to work for us. Let's take a couple of examples:

In 1927, a thirty-two-year-old man stood on the edge of the lake in Chicago's Lincoln Park, planning to drop beneath the dark waters and drown. His daughter had died, his company had gone bankrupt, his reputation had been ruined, and he was becoming an alcoholic. Looking into the lake, he asked himself what one small man in his position could possibly do. Then an answer came to him: he was now free to take risks, to initiate action on his own, and, by doing so, to help other people. He returned home and committed himself to the work that he believed the universe wanted him to do, instead of what he had been taught to do. He watched the laws of the natural world and altered his own living patterns accordingly, eventually changing his life completely. Those laws were to inspire and support him in his greatest achievements. But without his believing and taking a chance, his contributions to humanity would never have been made, and no one would have come to respect the name of Buckminster Fuller.

In 1854, a boy was withdrawn from school in Port Huron, Michigan, for "causing trouble." He had been there for three months. That was to be the only formal education of his life. He later worked as a laboratory assistant. The job ended when he blew up the laboratory. His employer picked him up and threw him out into the dust, saying that he would never amount to anything. But he had a plan, and he wasn't going to let a little problem or two stop him. He wanted to learn the mechanical applications of natural laws. He eventually became the foremost inventor in American history, with over thirteen hundred domestic and foreign patents registered in his name, a name synonymous with problem-solving genius, the name of Thomas Edison.

The play-it-safe pessimists of the world never accomplish much of anything, because they don't look clearly and objectively at situations, they don't recognize or believe in their own abilities, and they won't stretch those abilities to overcome even the smallest amount of risk. For example, when Roo fell into the stream during the famous Expedition to find the North Pole, what did Dismal Eeyore do about it? Long after Roo had been carried away by the current, Eeyore half-heartedly hung his tail over the water so that Roo could grab hold of it and pull himself out—or, more accurately, so that Eeyore would get credit for having tried something. Of course, he didn't really expect it to do any good, and of course it didn't.

Who was going to rescue Roo? Panicky Piglet was jumping up and down and making noises. Ineffective Owl was instructing Roo to keep his head above water. Concerned Kanga was asking if he was all right. Captain Rabbit was calling out commands.... But Positive Pooh was looking at the situation, seeing what he could do about it, and trying something:



Two pools below Roo he was standing with a long pole in his paws, and Kanga came up and took one end of it, and between them they held it across the lower part of the pool; and Roo, still bubbling proudly, "Look at me swimming," drifted up against it, and climbed out.

"Did you see me swimming?" squeaked Roo excitedly, while Kanga scolded him and rubbed him down. "Pooh, did you see me swimming? That's called swimming, what I was doing. Rabbit, did you see what I was doing? Swimming. Hallo, Piglet! I say, Piglet! What do you think I was doing! Swimming! Christopher Robin, did you see me—"

But Christopher Robin wasn't listening. He was looking at Pooh.

"Pooh," he said, "where did you find that pole?"

Pooh looked at the pole in his hands.

"I just found it," he said. "I thought it ought to be useful. I just picked it up."

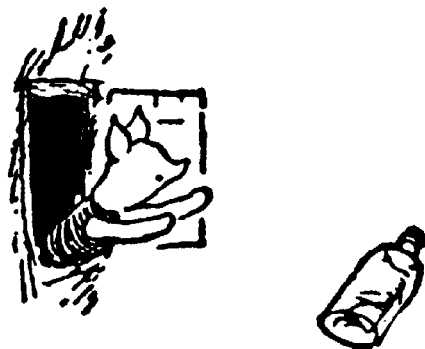
"Pooh," said Christopher Robin solemnly, "the Expedition is over. You have found the North Pole!"

As Pooh found out with the North Pole, once we see what the situation is and what we can do about it, we need to utilize everything we find along the way in order to accomplish whatever is required. More often than not, the things we need are there already; all we have to do is make use of them. For example, when Piglet was Trapped by the Flood . . .

"It's a little Anxious," he said to himself, "to be a Very Small Animal Entirely Surrounded by Water. Christopher Robin and Pooh could escape by Climbing Trees, and Kanga could escape by Jumping, and Rabbit could escape by Burrowing, and Owl could escape by Flying, and Eeyore could escape by—by Making a Loud Noise Until Rescued, and here am I, surrounded by water and I can't do *anything* . . ."

Then suddenly he remembered a story which Christopher Robin had told him about a man on a desert island who had written something in a bottle and thrown it in the sea; and Piglet thought that if he wrote something in a bottle and threw it in the water, perhaps somebody would come and rescue *him*!

So he did.



And when Piglet's bottle came floating past him, Pooh got the message. But then he had to go see Christopher Robin in order to find out what it said. So he corked up his biggest honey-jar, dropped it into the water, and jumped in after it. And after a little experimenting with his boat,



he floated off to Christopher Robin's house, where the message was read and a Rescue planned. Then the two of them realized that they needed a larger boat.

So Pooh got an idea:



And in an exciting Rescue, Piglet was saved by none other than the famous Pooh Bear, Discoverer of the North Pole.



"Say, Owl. Have you seen Pooh lately?"

"I rather thought I saw him putting something into the closet a little while ago," Owl replied. "I wasn't paying much attention to the matter, though."

"The closet? Well, I'll just take a look and—"

"What is it?" said Owl.

"Owl, *what* are all these boxes doing in here?"

"Boxes?" said Owl.

"And they're all full of . . . *shoes*."

"Shoes?" said Owl.

"Look at this. Loafers, 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>A. Sandals, 10B. Oxfords, 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>E . . ."

"All styles, all sizes," said Owl.

"Owl, I'm not quite sure, but I believe I Suspect something."

"It would appear that *Pooh* is the culprit," said Owl wisely.

"When you see him, tell him I want to talk with him, will you, Owl?"

"Absolutely."

The two Fearless Rescues just mentioned bring us to one of the most important terms of Taoism: *Tz'u*, which can be translated as "caring" or "compassion" and which is based upon the character for *heart*. In the sixty-seventh chapter of the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao-tse named it as his "first treasure," and then wrote, "From caring comes courage." We might add that from it also comes wisdom. It's rather significant, we think, that those who have no compassion have no wisdom'. Knowledge, yes; cleverness, maybe; wisdom, no. A clever mind is not a heart. Knowledge doesn't really care. Wisdom does. We also consider it significant that *cor*, the Latin word for "heart," is the basis for the word courage. Piglet put it this way: "She isn't Clever, Kanga isn't, but she would be so anxious about Roo that she would do a Good Thing to Do without thinking about it." *Tz'u* not only saved Roo, discovered the North Pole, and rescued Piglet; it also gave Piglet the courage to go get help for Pooh and Owl when Owl's house blew over.

Now Piglet, as we know, is a Very Small Anima!, and not exactly the *Bravest* one at that, but when Owl's house fell down, Piglet discovered that he had more courage than he had *thought* he had.

"Hallo, Owl," said Pooh. "I hope we're not too late for I mean, how are you, Owl? Piglet and I just came to see how you were, because it's Thursday."

"Sit down, Pooh, sit down, Piglet," said Owl kindly. "Make yourselves comfortable."

They thanked him, and made themselves as comfortable as they could.

"Because, you see, Owl," said Pooh, "we've been hurrying, so as to be in time for—so as to see you before we went away again."

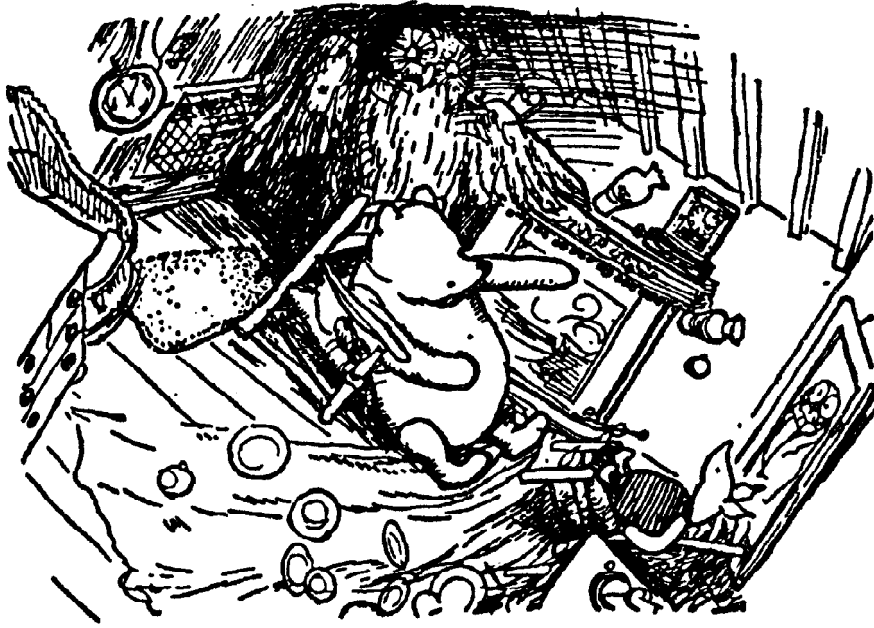
Owl nodded solemnly.

"Correct me if I am wrong," he said, "but am I right in supposing that it is a very Blusterous day outside?"

"Very," said Piglet, who was quietly thawing his ears, and wishing that he was safely back in his own house.

"I thought so," said Owl. "It was on just such a blusterous day as this that my Uncle Robert, a portrait of whom you see upon the wall on your right, Piglet, while returning in the late forenoon from a—What's that?"

There was a loud cracking noise.



"Look out!" cried Pooh. "Mind the clock! Out of the way, Piglet! Piglet, I'm falling on you!"

"Help!" cried Piglet. . .

"Pooh," said Piglet nervously.

"Yes?" said one of the chairs.

"Where are we?"

"I'm not quite sure," said the chair.

"Are we—are we in Owl's House?"

"I think so, because we were just going to have tea, and we hadn't had it."

"Oh!" said Piglet. "Well, did Owl *always* have a letter-box in his ceiling?"

But after the chair was pulled off of Pooh and he had taken a look around, he came up with a Plan.

Owl would fly up to the letter-box with a piece of string, push the string through the wire in the basket, and fly down again. Then Piglet would hold onto one end of the string while Pooh and Owl pulled on the other end . . .

"And there Piglet is," said Owl. "If the string doesn't break."

"Supposing it does?" asked Piglet, wanting to know.

"Then we try another piece of string."

This was not very comforting to Piglet, because however many pieces of string they tried pulling him up with, it would always be the same him coming down; but still, it did seem the only thing to do. So with one last look back in his mind at all the happy hours he had spent in the Forest *not* being pulled up to the ceiling by a piece of string; Piglet nodded bravely at Pooh and said that it was a Very Clever pup-pup-pup Clever pup-pup Plan.

And at last ....

He squeezed and he squoze, and then with one last sqooze he was out. Happy and excited he turned round to squeak a last message to the prisoners.

"It's all right," he called through the letter-box. "Your tree is blown right over, Owl, and there's a branch across the door, but Christopher Robin and I can move it; and we'll bring a rope for Pooh, and I'll go and tell him now, and I can climb down quite easily, I mean it's dangerous but I can do it all right, and Christopher Robin and I will be back in about half-an-hour. Good-bye, Pooh!" And without waiting to hear Pooh's answering "Good-bye, and thank you, Piglet," he was off.

"Half-an-hour," said Owl, settling himself comfortably. "That will just give me time to finish that story I was telling you about my Uncle Robert—a portrait of whom you see underneath you. Now let me see, where was I? Oh, yes. It was on just such a blustering day as this that my Uncle Robert—"

"Owl said you wanted to see me," said Pooh.

"All right, Pooh. Why the boxes of shoes in the closet?"

"I couldn't help myself," said Pooh. "How's that?"

"Well, first there was the card for *Mister* Pooh Bear. Then when I got to the store, just for a look ..."

"Yes?"

"The salesman was so *nice* to me. 'May I help you, Sir?' he said. He made me feel Important."

"Pooh, you didn't *need* those shoes," I said.

"I'll take them back," said Pooh.

"That's better."

"Lots of other people will be taking things back, too, I suppose."

"What?"

"I saw lots of people there buying things they didn't really need. All over the store."

"Quite likely," I said.

"I wasn't the only one," he said.

"Of course not, Pooh. A lot of people try to buy Happiness and Importance in the same sort of way. But you can be happy and important without doing that, you know."

"So can they," said Pooh.

Well, yes, that's true. So can anyone. Despite what Eeyore once said, when it comes to enjoying life and making use of who we are, all of us *can*; it's just that some *don't*.

Sitting contented by Walden Pond a few years ago, a Wise Observer wrote, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." The desperation may have been quiet then, we suppose. Now, it's deafening. But we don't have to be a part of it. We can stop our desperate clinging to hollow life-substitutes, and set ourselves free. When we make the first move, the process will begin. And that brings us to the Tiddely-Pom Principle, which comes from a song by Pooh:

*The more it snows*

*(Tiddely pom),*

*The more it goes*

*(Tiddely pom),*

*The more it goes*

*(Tiddely pom)*

*On snowing.*

It's sometimes referred to as the Snowball Effect, which can remind you of the time you pushed that little ball of snow along, and it got bigger and bigger until it got so big you couldn't stop it, and it rolled all the way down the hill and flattened the neighbor's car, and soon everyone was talking about the Huge Snowball that you let get completely out of control . . . and that may be why we prefer to think of it as the Tiddely-Pom Principle, instead.

Now the principle can work negatively or positively. It can promote cynicism as easily as it can encourage hope. It can build hardened criminals or courageous heroes, stupid vandals or brilliant creators. The important thing is to make it work for yourself and for the benefit of others, or face the Ugly Consequences.

Working with the Tiddely-Pom Principle, you use respect to build Respect. The more it snows, the more it goes:

So Pooh hummed it to him, all the seven verses and Piglet said nothing, but just stood and glowed. Never before had anyone sung ho for Piglet (PIGLET) ho all by himself. When it was over he wanted to ask for one of the verses over again but didn't quite like to. It was the verse beginning "O gallant Piglet," and it seemed to him a very thoughtful way of beginning a piece of poetry.

"Did I really do all that?" he said at last.

"Well," said Pooh, "in poetry—in a piece of poetry—well, you did it, Piglet, because the poetry says you did. And that's how people know."

"Oh!" said Piglet. "Because I—I thought I did blinch a little. Just at first. And it says, 'Did he blinch no no.' That's why."

"You only blinched inside," said Pooh, "and that's the bravest way for a Very Small Animal not to blinch that there is."

Piglet sighed with happiness, and began to think about himself. He was BRAVE . . .

So that later, when Uninformed Eeyore discovered a new house for Owl to move into, and it turned out to be *Piglet's* . . .

"Just the house for Owl. Don't you think so, little Piglet?"

And then Piglet did a Noble Thing, and he did it in a sort of dream, while he was thinking of all the wonderful words Pooh had hummed about him.

"Yes, it's just the house for Owl," he said grandly. "And I hope he'll be very happy in it." And then he gulped twice, because he had been very happy in it himself

"What do *you* think, Christopher Robin?" asked Eeyore a little anxiously, feeling that something wasn't quite right.

Christopher Robin had a question to ask first, and he was wondering how to ask it.

"Well," he said at last, "it's a very nice house, and if your own house is blown down, you must go somewhere else, mustn't you, Piglet? What would you do, if your house was blown down?"

Before Piglet could think, Pooh answered for him.

"He'd come and live with me," said Pooh, "wouldn't you, Piglet?"

Piglet squeezed his paw.

"Thank you, Pooh," he said, "I should love to."

Do you want to be really happy? You can begin by being appreciative of who you are and what you've got. Do you want to be really miserable? You can begin by being discontented. As Lao-tse wrote, "A tree as big around as you can reach starts with a small seed; a thousand-mile journey starts with one step." Wisdom, Happiness, and Courage are not waiting somewhere out beyond sight at the end of a straight line; they're part of a continuous cycle that begins right here. They're not only the ending, but the beginning as well. The more it snows, the more it goes, the more it goes on snowing. Chuang-tse described it this way:

It is widely recognized that the courageous spirit of a single man can inspire to victory an army of thousands. If one concerned with ordinary gain can create such an effect, how much more will be produced by one who cares for greater things!

(Applause.) A Toast! To Gallant Piglet and Fearless Pooh—

*Sing ho! for Piglet (PIGLET) ho!*

*Sing ho! for Piglet, ho!*

and

*Sing Ho! for a Bear!*

*Sing Ho! for a Pooh!*

*Sing Ho! for the life of a Bear!*

When they had all nearly eaten enough, Christopher Robin banged on the table with his spoon, and everybody stopped talking and was very silent, except Roo who was just finishing a loud attack of hiccups and trying to look as if it were one of Rabbit's relations.

"This party," said Christopher Robin, "is a party because of what someone did, and we all know who it was, and it's his party, because of what he did, and I've got a present for him and here it is." Then he felt about a little and whispered, "Where is it?"

While he was looking, Eeyore coughed in an impressive way and began to speak.

"Friends," he said, "including oddments, it is a great pleasure, or perhaps I had better say it has been a pleasure so far, to see you at my party. What I did was nothing. Any of you except Rabbit and Owl and Kanga—would have done the same. Oh, and Pooh. My remarks do not, of course, apply to Piglet and Roo, because they are too small. Any of you would have done the same. But it just happened to be Me. It was not, I need hardly say, with an idea of getting what Christopher Robin is looking for now" and he put his front leg to his mouth and said in a loud whisper, "Try under the

table"—"that I did what I did—but because I feel that we should all do what we can to help. I feel that we should all—"

Yes, yes, yes.

Well, anyway ...



"Here it is!" cried Christopher Robin excitedly

"Pass it down to silly old Pooh. It's for Pooh."

"For Pooh?" said Eeyore.

Of course it's for Pooh. Because he's *that* sort of Bear.

"Just what makes *Pooh* so special, anyway?" said Eeyore indignantly.

"Well, Eeyore, if you read the next chapter you may find out," I said.

"If we *must*," said Eeyore.

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## Nowhere and Nothing

"Where are we going?" said Pooh, hurrying after him, and wondering whether it was to be an Explore or a What-shall-I-do-about-you-know-what.

"Nowhere," said Christopher Robin.

So they began going there, and after they had walked a little way Christopher Robin said:

"What do you like doing best in the world, Pooh?"

(And of course, what Pooh liked doing best was going to Christopher Robin's house and eating, but since we've already quoted that, we don't think we need to quote it again.)

"I like that too," said Christopher Robin, "but what I like *doing* best is Nothing."

"How do you do Nothing?" asked Pooh, after he had wondered for a long time.

"Well, it's when people call out at you just as you're going off to do it, What are you going to do, Christopher Robin, and you say, Oh, nothing, and then you go and do it."

"Oh, I see," said Pooh.

"This is a nothing sort of thing that we're doing now."

"Oh, I see," said Pooh again.

"It means just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering."



Chuang-tse described it this way:

Consciousness wandered North to the land of the Dark Waters and climbed the Unnoticeable Slope, where he met Speechless Non-Doer. "I have three questions for you," Consciousness said. "First, what thoughts and efforts will lead us to understanding the Tao? Second, where must we go and what must we do to find peace in the Tao? Third; from what point must we start and which road must we follow in order to reach the Tao?" Speechless Non-Doer gave him no answer.

Consciousness travelled South to the land of the Bright Ocean and climbed the Mountain of Certainty, where he saw Impulsive Speech-Maker. He asked him the same questions. "Here are the answers," Impulsive Speech-Maker replied. But as soon as he started to speak, he became confused and forgot what he was talking about.

Consciousness returned to the palace and asked the Yellow Emperor, who told him, "To have no thought and put forth no effort is the first step towards understanding the Tao. To go nowhere and do nothing is the first step towards finding peace in the Tao. To start from no point and follow no road is the first step towards reaching the Tao."

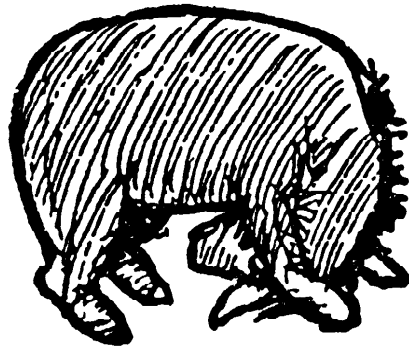
What Chuang-tse, Christopher Robin, and Pooh are describing is the Great Secret, the key that unlocks the doors of wisdom, happiness, and truth. What is that magic, mysterious something?

Nothing. To the Taoist, Nothing is something, and Something—at least the sort of thing that many consider to be important—is really nothing at all. Our explanation of this will attempt to give some sort of indication of what the Taoists call *T'ai Hsü*, the "Great Nothing."

We will begin with an illustration from the writings of Chuang-tse:

On his way back from the K'un-lun Mountains, the Yellow Emperor lost the dark pearl of Tao. He sent Knowledge to find it, but Knowledge was unable to understand it. He sent Distant Vision, but Distant Vision was unable to see it. He sent Eloquence, but Eloquence was unable to describe it. Finally, he sent Empty Mind, and Empty Mind came back with the pearl.

When Eeyore lost his tail, who found it for him? Clever Rabbit? No. He was busy doing Clever Things. Scholarly Owl? No. He didn't recognize it when he saw it. Know-It-All Eeyore? No. He didn't even realize that it was missing until Pooh told him. And even then, it took a while to convince him that the tail was definitely Not There.



Then Pooh went off to find it. First, he stopped at Owl's house, and Owl told him in twenty-five thousand monotonous words or more that the Thing To Do would be to Issue a Reward, which would involve writing out a . . . (yawn) . . . notice, and putting it ... (YAWN) ... all over the ... (umm). Oh, yes—where were we? All over the Forest. And then they went outside . . .

And Pooh looked at the knocker and the notice below it, and he looked at the bell-rope and the notice below it, and the more he looked at the bell-rope, the more he felt that he had seen something like it, somewhere else, sometime before.

"Handsome bell-rope, isn't it?" said Owl.

Pooh nodded.

"It reminds me of something," he said, "but I can't think what. Where did you get it?"

"I just came across it in the Forest. It was hanging over a bush, and I thought at first somebody lived there, so I rang it, and nothing happened, and then I rang it again very loudly, and it came off in my hand, and as nobody seemed to want it, I took it home, and—"

*Aha!*

So Pooh returned the tail to Eeyore, and after it had been put back in place, Eeyore felt much better.

For a while, anyway.



An Empty sort of mind is valuable for finding pearls and tails and things because it can see what's in front of it. An Overstuffed mind is unable to. While the Clear mind listens to a bird singing, the Stuffed-Full-of-Knowledge-and-Cleverness mind wonders what *kind* of bird is singing. The more Stuffed Up it is, the less it can hear through its own ears and see through its own eyes. Knowledge and Cleverness tend to concern themselves with the wrong sorts of things, and a mind confused by Knowledge, Cleverness, and Abstract Ideas tends to go chasing off after things that don't matter, or that don't even exist, instead of seeing, appreciating, and making use of what is right in front of it. Let's consider Emptiness in general for a moment. What is it about a Taoist landscape painting that seems so refreshing to so many different kinds of people? The Emptiness, the space that's not filled in. What is it about fresh snow, clean air, pure water? Or good music? As Claude Debussy expressed it, "Music is the space between the notes."

"Wooh *Baby!* Oooaowee *BABY!* (Wanga wanga wanga.) Baby, don't *leave* me! (Wanga wanga crash bang!) Baby, don't *LEAVE* me! " (Click.) Like silence after noise, or cool, clear water on a hot, stuffy day, Emptiness cleans out the messy mind and charges up the batteries of spiritual energy. Many people are afraid of Emptiness, however, because it reminds them of Loneliness. Everything has to be filled in, it seems—appointment books, hillsides, vacant lots but when all the spaces are filled, the Loneliness *really* begins. Then the Groups are joined, the Classes are signed up for, and the Gift-to-Yourself items are bought. When the Loneliness starts creeping in the door, the Television Set is turned on to make it go away. But it doesn't go away. So some of *us* do instead, and after discarding the emptiness of the Big Congested Mess, we discover the fullness of Nothing.

One of our favorite examples of the value of Nothing is an incident in the life of the Japanese emperor Hirohito. Now, being emperor in one of the most frantically Confucianist countries in the world is not necessarily all that *relaxing*. From early morning until late at night, practically every minute of the emperor's time is filled in with meetings, audiences, tours, inspections, and who-knows-what. And

through a day so tightly scheduled that it would make a stone wall seem open by comparison, the emperor must glide, like a great ship sailing in a steady breeze.

In the middle of a particularly busy day, the emperor was driven to a meeting hall for an appointment of some kind. But when he arrived, there was no one there. The emperor walked into the middle of the great hall, stood silently for a moment, then bowed to the empty space. He turned to his assistants, a large smile on his face. "We must schedule more appointments like this," he told them. "I haven't enjoyed myself so much in a long time."

In the forty-eighth chapter of the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao-tse wrote, "To attain knowledge, add things every day. To attain wisdom, remove things every day." Chuang-tse described the principle in his own humorous way:

"I am learning," Yen Hui said.

"How?" the Master asked.

"I forgot the rules of Righteousness and the levels of Benevolence," he replied.

"Good, but could be better," the Master said.

A few days later, Yen Hui remarked, "I am making progress."

"How?" the Master asked.

"I forgot the Rituals and the Music," he answered.

"Better, but not perfect," the Master said.

Some time later, Yen Hui told the Master, "Now I sit down and forget everything."

The Master looked up, startled. "What do you mean, you forget everything?" he quickly asked.

"I forget my body and senses, and leave all appearance and information behind," answered Yen Hui.

"In the middle of Nothing, I join the Source of All Things."

The Master bowed. "You have transcended the limitations of time and knowledge. I am far behind you. You have found the Way!"

Gathering, analyzing, sorting, and storing information—these functions and more the mind can perform so automatically, skillfully, and effortlessly that it makes the most sophisticated computer look like a plastic toy by comparison. But it can do infinitely more. To use the mind as it's all too commonly used, on the kinds of things that it's usually used on, is about as inefficient and inappropriate as using a magic sword to open up a can of beans. The power of a clear mind is beyond description. But it can be attained by anyone who can appreciate and utilize the value of Nothing. Let's say you get an idea—or, as Pooh would more accurately say, it gets you. Where did it come from? From this something, which came from that something? If you are able to trace it all the way back to its source, you will discover that it came from Nothing. And chances are, the greater the idea, the more directly it came from there. "A stroke of genius! Completely unheard of! A revolutionary new approach!" Practically everyone has had some sort of an idea like that sometime, most likely after a sound sleep when everything was so clear and filled with Nothing that an Idea suddenly appeared in it. But we don't have to fall asleep for a few hours for that to happen. We can be awake, instead—*completely* awake. The process is very natural.

It starts when we are children, helpless but aware of things, enjoying what is around us. Then we reach adolescence, still helpless but trying to at least appear independent. When we outgrow that stage, we become adults—self-sufficient individuals able and mature enough to help others as we have learned to help ourselves.

But the adult is not the highest stage of development. The end of the cycle is that of the independent, clear-minded, all-seeing Child. That is the level known as wisdom. When the *Tao Te Ching* and other wise books say things like, "Return to the beginning; become a child again," that's what they're referring to. Why do the *enlightened* seem filled with light and happiness, like children? Why do they sometimes even look and talk like children? Because they are. The wise are Children Who Know. Their minds have been emptied of the countless minute somethings of small learning, and filled with the wisdom of the Great Nothing, the Way of the Universe.

They walked on, thinking of This and That, and by-and-by they came to an enchanted place on the very top of the Forest called Galleons Lap, which is sixty-something trees in a circle; and Christopher Robin knew that it was enchanted because nobody had ever been able to count whether it was sixty-three or sixty-four, not even when he tied a piece of string round each tree after he had counted it. Being enchanted, its floor was not like the floor of the Forest, gorse and bracken and heather, but close-set grass, quiet and smooth and green.... Sitting there they could see the whole world spread out until it reached the sky, and whatever there was all the world over was with them in Galleons Lap.



There the Pooh books come to an end, in the Enchanted Place at the top of the Forest. We can go there at any time. It's not far away; it's not hard to find. Just take the path to Nothing, and go Nowhere until you reach it. Because the Enchanted Place is right where you are, and if you're Friendly With Bears, you can find it.

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### The Now of Pooh

In the morning sunshine, in the evening twilight, a small Bear travels through a Forest. Why did we follow him when we were so much younger? He is, after all, only a Bear of Little Brain. But is Brain

all that important? Is it really Brain that takes us where we need to go? Or is it all too often Brain that sends us off in the wrong direction, following the echo of the wind in the treetops, which we think is real, rather than listening to the voice within us that tells us which way to turn?

A Brain can do all kinds of things, but the things that it can do are not the most important things. Abstract cleverness of mind only separates the thinker from the world of reality, and that world, the Forest of Real Life, is in a desperate condition now because of too many who think too much and care too little. In spite of what many minds have thought themselves into believing, that mistake cannot continue for much longer if everything is going to survive. The one chance we have to avoid certain disaster is to change our approach, and to learn to value wisdom and contentment. These are the things that are being searched for anyway, through Knowledge and Cleverness, but they do not come from Knowledge and Cleverness. They never have, and they never will. We can no longer afford to look so desperately hard for something in the wrong way and in the wrong place. If Knowledge and Cleverness are allowed to go on wrecking things, they will before much longer destroy all life on earth as we know it, and what little may temporarily survive will not be worth looking at, even if it would somehow be possible for us to do so.

The masters of life know the Way, for they listen to the voice within them, the voice of wisdom and simplicity, the voice that reasons beyond Cleverness and knows beyond Knowledge. That voice is not just the power and property of a few, but has been given to everyone. Those who pay attention to it are too often treated as exceptions to a rule, rather than as examples of the rule in operation, a rule that can apply to anyone who makes use of it.

Within each of us there is an Owl, a Rabbit, an Eeyore, and a Pooh. For too long, we have chosen the way of Owl and Rabbit. Now, like Eeyore, we complain about the results. But that accomplishes nothing. If we are smart, we will choose the way of Pooh. As if from far away, it calls to us with the voice of a child's mind. It may be hard to hear at times, but it is important just the same, because without it, we will never find our way through the Forest.

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## Backword

"Well, what do you think, Pooh?" I said.

"Think about what?" asked Pooh.

"The Tao of Pooh, of course."

"The *how* of Pooh?" asked Pooh.

"Do we have to go through *that* again?" I said.

"Go through *what* again?" asked Pooh.

"The Tao of Pooh," I said.

"What's the Tao of Pooh?"

"You know—the Uncarved Block, the Cottleston Pie Principle, the Pooh Way, *That* Sort of Bear, and all that."

"Oh," said Pooh.

"That's the Tao of Pooh," I said.

"Oh," said Pooh.

"How would *you* describe it?" I asked.

"Well . . . this just came to me," he said. "I'll sing it to you."

"All right."

"Now, then . . . (erhum),"

To know the Way,

We **go** the Way;

We **do** the Way

The way we do

The things we do.

It's all there in front of you,

But if you try too hard to see it,

You'll only become Confused.



I am me,  
And you are you,  
As you can see;  
But when you do  
The things that **you** can do,  
You will find the Way,  
And the Way will follow you.

"That's what I think it is," he said.

"*Perfect*," I said. "But you know, don't you . . ."

"Know what?" said Pooh.

"It's the same thing."

"Oh," said Pooh. "So it is."