

PATIENCE

Tao Te Ching - Chapter 26

The heavy fabricates the root of the light.
The tranquil fabricates command of the flurried.
Therefore the sage puts one foot
 in front of the other the entire day,
 But never leaves his heavy pack behind.
 Though there may be glorious sights at hand,
 His course remains high and detached,
 and smooth as the flight of a swallow.
How will a lord of then thousand chariots fool
 with his empire as though
 he himself had nothing to lose.

Act lightly and you will lose your rootedness.

Act in a flurried way and you lose your command.

(tr. William Scott Wilson

Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2010)

Commenting on this, zen teacher and therapist Robert Rosenbaum in Walking The Way writes:

During daily life when you encounter hurdles, the first thing to do is to not do anything. Use the method you learned as a child to cross the street: stop, look, and listen. Don't try to solve things too soon, or your actions will just make your situation more unclear. Check in with your current internal state: is it resilient enough to deal with the obstacle/ If not, first do what's necessary to nurture yourself with food, sleep, friendship, and your allies in nature.

Once you're ready to look at the difficulty, ask yourself: have you been up against it before/ If so, what has helped/ What hasn't helped, despite your repeated efforts. So many problems are maintained by our efforts to solve them; if your effort hasn't worked after giving it a good try, stop repeating an exercise of futility.

This takes patience. Patience, though, is not the forced frustration of waiting but the art of staying close to your supplies, of remaining in touch with the undisturbed center of your being. When you wait, you anticipate what comes next and want to hurry along, so you feel restless and on edge. Patience is more pleasant: settling into the situational hand so you can take stock of what's around you and notice more.

Standing in line for a movie, instead of tapping your foot and checking your watch to see how many minutes remain before the show, relax: feel your feet on the ground, and observe the crowd around you. You'll probably find something interesting or entertaining if you look with curiosity. Sitting in highway traffic in your car, instead of fruitlessly peering out to see how all the other lanes seem to be moving faster, let gravity help you unwind. Use the slowdown to loosen the hands that are gripping the steering wheel so tightly; drop your elbows and relax the shoulders that have tensed up as high as your ears.

Patience requires acceptance, but acceptance doesn't mean resignation: it means seeing a situation clearly without adding or subtracting anything from it. This is easier said than done, since we color our situation with filters according to how we would like things to be. But acceptance builds a deeper foundation in reality: it's easier to master a situation if you are dealing with what is actually front of you, which is usually larger than you are aware of.

(Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2013)