



Welcome! and Thank you for being here!

We have been looking forward to today. THIS is quite a milestone for us. THIS is outside of our comfort zone. WE believe in Tao. We believe it being so fundamental and critical for every life to consider, that it deserves every effort we put in, to challenge and to stretch ourselves and more, so that we can learn to express Tao in the language and the culture that we are sharing and adopting here in the Land of the Long White Cloud.

At the same time, I wouldn't hesitate to say THIS is also a little outside of your comfort zone. Reaching just outside of our respective comfort zones, we share the goal of learning more about Tao and discovering more about our connection with it.

1st, I would like to introduce you to a Chinese concept. It helps us learning about Tao and about our True Self, as it helps us to open our eyes and open them again to observe things we otherwise over look.

Let's imagine it is night time: I say to you "tonight, the moon is bright!" You ask "where is it?" I say "There!" Your eye gaze moves from my face, to my pointing finger, then following it, you see the moon. Through my pointing finger, you find the moon. In this simple example, my pointing finger is a means, and is not the moon, which was what we wanted to find. To not mistake the means to be what we were looking for is what this concept is all about.



You would have heard US, temple friends, say, that the seasonal change is Tao, the growing finger nail is Tao, the universe is Tao. Let us use this concept to discuss what IS Tao. The growing finger nail celebrates the Tao working in me. The growing finger nail is part of me, but it does not define me. The seasonal change is the means, indicating the Tao is in action. The seasonal change, or even the four seasons are the effect of Tao (some would even argue that the four seasons are the effect of the earth moving around the sun), but not the Tao, itself. By the same token the universe, constantly, in full motion, expresses to us Tao's existence, but again, it is part of Tao, it is not Tao in its entirety.

Through human evolution and progress, we learn, discover and understand a lot about how things work around us. For example, we know more about the Milky Way than any of our ancestors, but that knowledge does not stop us appreciating how beautiful it is. "It doesn't stop being magic just because you know how it works." — Terry Pratchett, The Wee Free Men.

Knowledge is great. Knowing when to jump outside of its box to observe its boundary and limitation helps us see beyond the means to what we are truly seeking.

With this concept in mind, I would like to share this short clip with you... It was published on the 14th of Mar, 2016: If the population of the world was only 100 people, what would the world look like?



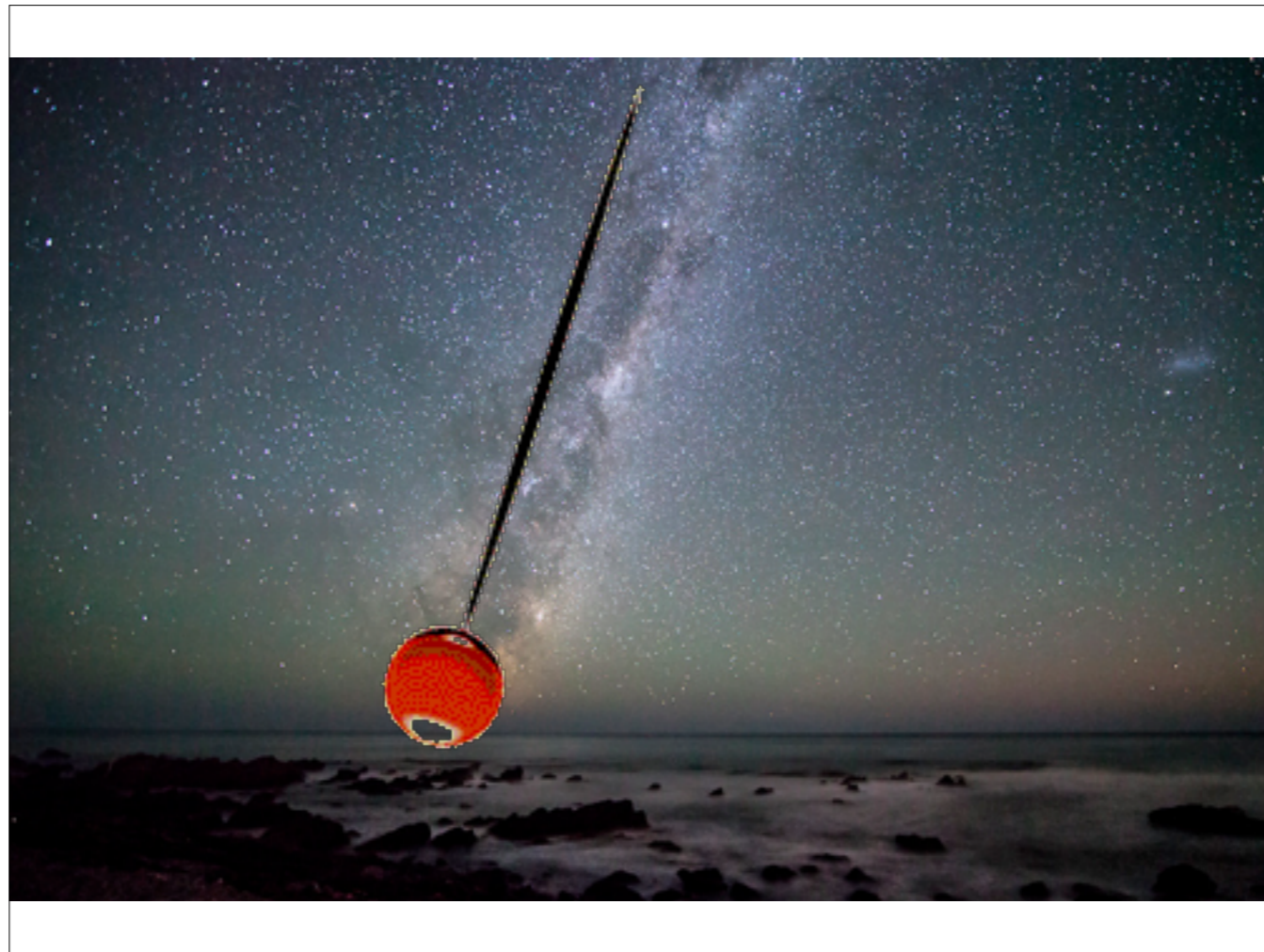
Just temporarily, let us put aside the right and wrong, the cause, the perspectives, the knowledge or even the how. Applying the concept we just discussed, what do you see through the statistics? What kind of story are you getting from it?

Let us be mindful that we are here to learn more about Tao, and more about ourselves. Keeping that in mind, let me play this even shorter clip for you...

It is a Time-Lapse Map of Every Nuclear Explosion from 1945-1998. Again, this is available on youtube, to save time, I am going to jump to the summary at the end, where the explosions were grouped by countries rather than the sequence of its occurrence (summary by country from 12:00~13:40)



Surely, nuclear energy must be one of the important landmark discoveries for we, the human race. At one end, the energy we derive from it, is the backbone of our modern society, our need for it seems to only ever go up. However, on the other end of the spectrum, the fear of its unequivocal and absolute destruction casts such a shadow from our past into the future. It seem to paralyse us, the human race.



Re-reminding ourselves about the importance of not stopping at the means, but through it, gaining a better insight into what we were seeking, please allow me to share with you my thoughts after seeing the 2 clips, and I would love to hear your thoughts at our 'Open Mic' session this afternoon.

If we were to abstract our behaviour through the entire period of human existence, to such a level, this, is what comes to my mind... a constant swinging pendulum.

As we strive for betterment as a species, we seem to constantly swing between different extremes: The pride of one culture becomes the destruction of another. Complete faith in any one thing becomes the exclusion of the rest. You must be wrong, so that I am right. For me to win, you must lose.

“In the middle of the seesaw is
a place that never moves.”
— Terry Pratchett, Wintersmith

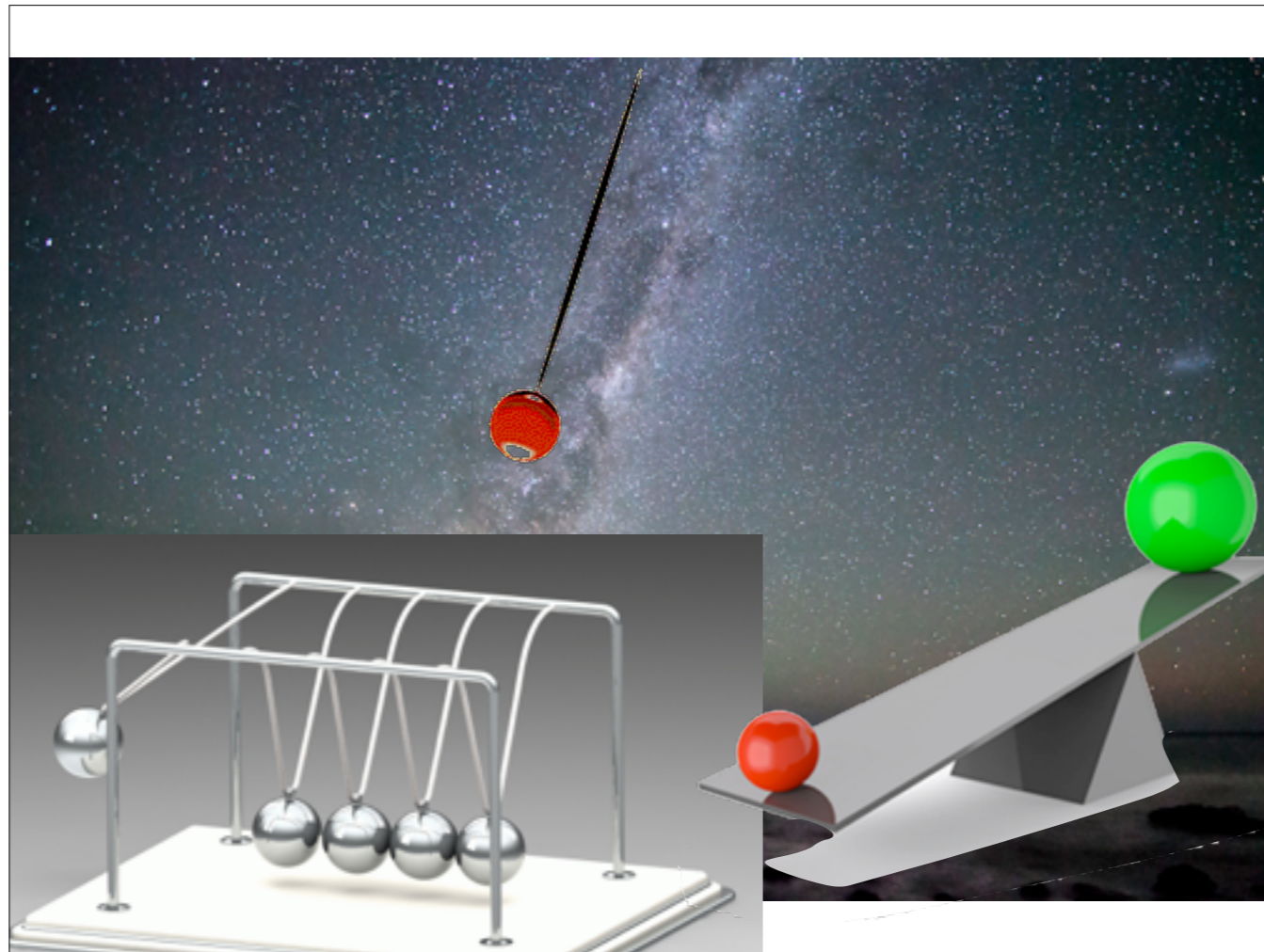


Yet all around us, silently, nature and the universe are telling us a completely different story. As simple as the spring gives way to the summer, which in turn changes to the autumn, and then into winter. It provides and supports all life along its way. Each life takes the bit that it needs to prosper, and relinquishes all at end of play. No matter how harsh a natural environment may be, yet some life prospers. No matter how cruel a natural disaster may be, life always recovers. Nothing is wasted and nothing is too precious to share. Dung is priceless to the dung beetle, while oil was once living breathing flesh.

Nature works harmoniously to be plentiful and to cater for all. Nature is Tao in action. It is one of the means for us to gain an insight into Tao.

“In the middle of the seesaw is a place that never moves” - Terry Pratchett, Wintersmith.

If the seesaw is the universe, you could say the middle bit, the bit that never moves, yet supports it all, is Tao.



While we, our minds, our thoughts, our emotions, our opinions, our behaviours, constantly swing between different extremes, ...

our True Self, is the middle bit of that seesaw that never moves.

To find our True Self, is to find the middle bit that never moves, is to rest, to take a break from the constant swinging...

The longer we stay holding on to our True Self, the centre of it all, the more grounded we are, the more stable we are, especially when interacting and being part of this fast moving and modern life.



Finally, I would like to introduce an important character in Chinese culture, “South Pole Longevity Buddha” is the direct translation.

and to share with you one of the teachings he had for us...

I constantly ask of myself:

...

May I diligently learn, through practice and experience,
life's true meaning;

May I forgive and forget, be content, and be grateful for
what we have... thereby, having a tranquil spirit which
radiates warmth.

Not only should we help ourselves, but we also must be
benefactors to our parents, our children, our husbands, our
wives, our relatives, our friends, as well as to all living
beings—

for the benefit of ourselves, for the benefit of everyone, and
for the benefit of a harmonious world.

South Pole Longevity Buddha

I constantly ask of myself:

May licentious thoughts not arise in my mind;

May I neither spread rumours, gossip nor quarrel;

May my mind constantly dwell upon stillness and purity (true benevolent nature);

May I speak sincerely and without false pretences;

May I give and do more for others... thereby, enhancing good fortune and wisdom;

May I avoid selfishness, envy, and discord with others... thereby, eliminating or reducing the consequences of such karma;

May I enthusiastically help people without disliking or avoiding the poor and downtrodden;

May I attentively observe and reveal life's imperfections;

May I guard against overstepping my bounds of wealth and status;

May I diligently learn, through practice and experience, life's true meaning;

May I forgive and forget, be content, and be grateful for what we have... thereby, having a tranquil spirit which radiates warmth.

Not only should we help ourselves, but we also must be benefactors to our parents, our children, our husbands, our wives, our relatives, our friends, as well as to all living beings—

for the benefit of ourselves, for the benefit of everyone, and for the benefit of a harmonious world.

南極仙翁慈訓～省思文

我時時刻刻自我要求，邪淫不生於心，

是非不出於口。念念清靜純善，言言誠懇無欺。



“Everything’s got a story in it. Change the story, change the world.” - Terry Pratchett, A Hat Full of Sky

I really like the story that our Longevity Buddha gave us, a world where we are working for not just ourselves, but also for the benefit of everyone, and for the benefit of a harmonious world!”

To summarise my session, I would like to apply Longevity Buddha’s teaching in my reflection of the 1st clip. This may sound silly, but the story I derived is like this, if the world were 100 people, all the mentioned gaps and imperfections in that clip therefore become the opportunities one would utilise to work for the benefit of a harmonious world.

Therefore, knowing the actual population is greater than 100, by lots, my opportunities to work towards a harmonious world are automatically upscaled by lots. With such a huge amount of opportunities around me, all it takes is for me to replace the urge of being a constantly swinging pendulum, by holding on to my True Self, the middle bit that never moves, and learning to replace little bits of negativity with positive energy in my interactions with the world.

Change that story, give me a positive view on the world, the future, and also putting me in my happy place, knowing that I am working on something I can be proud of for our next generation. On that note, I would like to thank you for your time and attention. I would also really appreciate your thoughts and feedback. Please feel free to catch up during the break, or in our open Mic session this afternoon.