

23.

What Water Teaches

Let your poem speak of what we can learn from water's behavior.

The highest good is like water.

Water gives life to the ten thousand things and does not strive.

It flows in places men reject and so is like the Tao.

In dwelling, be close to the land.

In meditation, go deep in the heart.

In dealing with others, be gentle and kind.

In speech, be true.

In ruling, be just.

In business, be competent.

In action, watch the timing.

Tao Te Ching

Translation by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English

The Lessons of Water

The best way to conduct oneself may be observed in the behavior of water.— Tao te ching

When given a place to wait, it fills that place
By taking the shape of what contains it,
It's upper surface poised and level,
Absorbing, accepting what it can as lightly
Or heavily as it does itself. If pressed
Down, it will offer back in all directions
Everything it was given. If chilled it will shatter
Daylight and whiten to stars, will harden and sharpen
And turn unforeseeably dazzling. Neglected,
It will disappear, being transformed and lifted
Into thin air. Or thrown away, it will gather
With other water, which is all one water,
And rise and fall, regather and go on rising
And falling the more quickly its path descends
And the more slowly as it wears that path away,
To be left awhile, to stir for the moon, to wait
For the wind to begin again.

David Wagoner

Water can't be broken —
trapped yes,
heated or cooled,
but water is strong
so it yields,
and left to its own
devices

always flows
downhill,
singing as it goes,
toward the great
community,
the Ocean of Yes.

Even the clouds
are water.
Their sails filled with wind,
they are flying home.

Learn the lessons
of loss and change.
Be water.
Be unbroken.

jch 11/26/11

"Song for Going to the Water,"

If your heart is not well,
If your spirit is not well,
These words may help you.

Wake in the hour
Just before dawn.
Wake in the hours
Before first light.
Wake when the animals of the night
Have ended their songs,
When the animals of the day
Have not yet begun their songs.

Walk without words.
Follow the path
That leads to the stream.

Then, as the first light
Touches the stream,
Bend to the water,
Speak these words:

"Long Person, I come to ask your help."

Then hold up
A cup of that water
And drink the dawn.

(purported to be from the Cherokee tradition)

Water does not resist. Water flows. When you plunge your hand into it, all you feel is a caress. Water is not a solid wall, it will not stop you. But water always goes where it wants to go, and nothing in the end can stand against it. Water is patient. Dripping water wears away a stone. Remember that, my child. Remember you are half water. If you can't go through an obstacle, go around it. Water does.

Margaret Atwood