Taoism contains profound wisdom about the cosmos, nature, human life, and education. There are many books on Tao and its applications in every facet of our lives. Taoist learning is often combined with our inner work involving cultivation of energy and spirit and a world view of interconnection positing a universe that is creative and intelligent. Dr. John Miller (who goes by the name Jack) is a wonderful scholar whose writing has positive energy and embraces the spirit of the Tao. It is always a joy reading his and his collaborators’ work. This one is no exception. Many parts of the book are just beautiful to read, illuminating wisdom and elegance.

Jack Miller, Xiang Li, and Tian Ruan attempt to “reset” education, positing that we live in an interconnected world, one in which the cosmos, earth, and human beings are inextricably linked by Tao, the creative force and energy of all existence. The book touches on the main essence of Taoist teaching, for example, qi, harmony, balance, virtues, self-cultivation, wu-wei (following the way of Tao effortlessly and with grace), and respect for nature. What makes the book stand out is that these Taoist concepts are made concrete and come to life through vivid examples, enabling readers to experience and envision what the Tao of teaching and learning is like.

The authors help us envision a new form of education based on Taoist philosophy. Discussed are journeys inward to connect with our inner spirit and with nature. Through inner work and cultivation, we are much better equipped to educate for well-being, wholeness, compassion and wisdom. Chapter 1 by Xiang Li focuses on teaching Taoist philosophy through a classical Suzhou garden. The chapter is a nice introduction to Taoism, providing down-to-earth knowledge such as the notion of yin
and yang, and Taoist spiritual practices. The example of the student club learning in a Taoist heritage garden is very interesting, illustrating how children can connect with nature if service learning, experiential learning, and inquiry-based education are integrally provided. In chapters 2–6, Jack cites from various philosophers and Taoist texts. His insights are refreshing. Jack offers his own experience of guiding teachers to do meditation and develop insights. He shares what the teachers experienced and the impact of doing meditation practice. He critiques the imbalances in our education, such as focusing on content not process, knowledge not imagination, and the rational not the intuitive. He offers great ideas about how we can balance the yin and yang of school curriculum. Chapter 7 by Tian Ruan provides vivid descriptions of how she employed “play pedagogies” that are child-centred. Her teaching promotes students’ holistic development and creativity through joyful and effortless play. The last chapter concludes the book with concerns for climate change and posits love as the underlying energy that sustains all life forms. It is very profound and elevating.

The book provides wonderful insights on Taoism and its wisdom for education. It is very timely for our world. Teachers can gain a lot from this book, such as practices for aligning their body, mind, heart, spirit, and qi, achieving calmness, tranquility, mindfulness, and deep knowing. Jack and his co-authors illustrate how to balance yin and yang in education, how wu-wei manifests in teachers’ pedagogies, such as teaching with spontaneity and grace and leaving space open for creative imagination and play. During the COVID-19 shut-down period when I was writing this, I was imagining what a world we could have if Tao was fully integrated into our life and education. It is high time we educate future generations to harbour and live the wisdom of Tao.

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