# The Tao of the Twentieth Century

by

a. angove

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by the author:
Bungeleen and other bush songs
love songs, the tao and mt. nugong
Bun Jirrah Gingee Munjie
Mt. Nugong No.22
Kurnai Poems (Gunnai wark)
Tao of Modern Times

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A.A.
September 1998

" I heartily accept the motto,-'That government is best which governs least;' and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe,-'That government is best which governs not at all;' and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government." H.D. Thoreau
*On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*

## the tao of the twentieth century

(with apologies to Lao Tsu, Thoreau, Kropotkin, Christ and etc.)

1.
bureaucracy and creativity
are not handmaidens;
they are deadly enemies.

2.
some definitions are self explanatory;
thus someone who always works
will leave much unfinished.

3.
anything that moves
is a close relative.
anything that grows
is a cousin once removed.

4.
when life is complicated
the tax man makes it more so.
we pay accountants
money we do not have
to get back money
we do not owe.

5.
shout out in anger
'Fuck the taxman'.

6.
god is only good works
and good works is god.

7.
you are slowly changing
from an angry young man
into an angry old one.

8.
all but genius
is a small increment
on the work of others;
that is known
as adding to knowledge.

9.
genius is the leap
across the gap
no one else can see;
that, by definition,
is indescribable.

10.
a funeral makes me sad;
therefore why should I
watch one on television
or listen on the radio?

11.
let all know
on whose foundations
your work is built.

12.
the man who dislikes funerals
is to be pitied;
for he will eventually
attend one.

13.
thus the wattle
and the eucalypt
are also members
of my family tree.

14.
in their ambitious desires
politicians confuse
fame with immortality,
power with good works.

15.
as with all good works,
with god, with heaven,
they have a 'use by' date.

16.
thus even the works of
Shakespeare and Van Gogh,
da Vinci and Einstein,
will pass into eternity

17.
there is one just reward
for all good works -
not fame, nor pleasure -
but in doing them.

18.
yesterday Nero fiddled.
today politicians dominate
and occupy the media;
whilst away to the south
(on page 19) the ice caps
are beginning to break up.

19.
do not confuse
good works with doing good;
good works are created
by sweat and imagination
and stand alone.

20.
a chess board is flat
- the level playing field
of politicians and economists -
but with only one player
(the economic rationalist)
and no J.M. Keynes.

21.
it is a task thinking
about chess
past chess
around chess.

22.
parliament -
the haven
of mainly
mediocre
men.

23.
in chess black and white;
in life a murky grey.

24.
in chess a powerful queen;
in life only a fallen princess.

25.
in chess the winner logic and strategy;
in life luck, bravado and hard work.

26.
in chess logic wins;
in life only in the long run
(was it Keynes who said
we are all dead in the long run?).

27.
in chess a powerful queen;
in life a tabloid owner.

28.
in chess black and white are equal;
in life black has few knights
no castles and many pawns.

29.
our politicians have
all the moves and strategies;
are they playing a different game
or the wrong one?

30.
in chess where the poet,
where the court jester?

31.
your name will soon be forgotten;
only good works and kind words
will live on.

32.
have your say by all means
but remember
there is no last word.

33.
you have only
so many steps to take;
thus always try to
add to knowledge
rather than repeat
what has been said before.

34.
to rush into print
is a mistake;
good works will
endure regardless
of priority.

35.
before rushing into print
make sure you have
something to say.

36.
remember
no amount of landslides
to one side or the other
will arrest the greenhouse effect
or stem the population tide.

37.
some say
we get the politicians
we deserve.

38.
before they even start
they are at their apex of power;
from here on in
it is all downhill.

39.
now a new show begins
called "Little John
and the mad hatter's tea party."

40.
we remodel the past
on our own expectations;
sometimes (as if by accident)
we fall upon a truth.

41.
there is no mandate!
We have booted the other side out
not put your side in.

42.
priority is an academic delusion.
All work is merely an increment
on that of others - like adding
a stair to a staircase to the clouds.

43.
for every earthly problem
and at each moment in time
there are a thousand keen minds
searching for a solution.

44.
you add stairs to your staircase
but are they going somewhere...
or nowhere?

45.
it is not a matter of
where the staircase is going -
but how you build your stairs
and that you build them.

46.
what are you doing
in this backwater?
waiting for the world
to come to you?

47.
to be fair and just,
to seek the truth
is one thing;
to be politically correct
is another.

48.
a mass murderer
is a true coward;
he will kill
indiscriminately
those who cannot
fight back.

49.
many people are envious
of youth and freedom;
they wish to enslave
with drudgery and uniform
and call it discipline.

50.
prejudice, bigotry and mob rule
dominate the air waves;
it is a pretence of democracy
and called talk back radio.

51.
a mass murderer
with bare hands
cannot even kill himself.

52.
what then are the ingredients
of mass murder?
a weapon of mass destruction
a mass of innocent people
the mass media.
and a single maniac.

53.
be patient
and the world will come to you.

54.
talk back radio -
is it pandering to the people
or giving air time to those
you do not have to pay?

55.
talk back radio equals
radio on the cheap;
ignorance and anger;
half truths as facts;
blasts from bigots;
reaction and despair.

56.
these are restless times;
be cautious, relax
and see how stupid you are
how stupid it all is.

57.
these are restless times;
therefore you are in trouble
if you cannot laugh at yourself.

58.
what is art? merely
freedom, imagination
and good works.

59.
these are restless times;
many people rush
from one place to another
with feverish activity
chasing the mirages
of the ad-men.

60.
if there is no freedom, love,
peace, justice, good works
or the hope of it -
there is nothing.

61.
someone once said;
"Do not hope for much.
Then you will
not be disappointed".

62.
is it the older you get
the less you know?

or perhaps the older you get
the less you know you know?

63.
hold the centre
with kindness and humour
whilst deception and dishonesty
are in the air.

64.
in the backblocks
nothing changes;
there is no time.
elsewhere clocks race
faster than heartbeats
and alarms sound.

65.
where is the wisdom
of our age?
on shithouse walls?

66.
are you
imprisoned in yesterday;
creating utopias,
abolishing money,
waving your black flag?

67.
thus it follows
when you do not
hope for much
you will sometimes
be pleasantly surprised.

68.
with one team on top
another will be on the bottom;
thus with some rich
there will be many poor
and with the powerful
a legion of the powerless.
inequity is the breeding
ground of discontent.

69.
we always know
winter is upon us
as politicians migrate
to warmer climes.

70.
you may be
interested to know
this backwater
is my home.

71.
downsizing means
closing a bank
in every country town.

72.
what is one reason for good works?
to combat the waves of ignorance,
anger, avarice, hatred, greed.

73.
without mankind
good works would not be required;
since the converse is so
good works are necessary.

74.
pity the superannuated hippy;
his heart as young as ever,
his body growing old.

75.
where are you now my shadow?
still obscure, obsessed, marginalised,
still swimming against the tide?

76.
at heart I remain the childish peasant
still struggling with big words.

77.
you have saved and planned
all your life
for your retirement.
now you are too old to enjoy it.

78.
our civilisation peaks;
gambling, prostitution and drug dealing
are the only growth industries.

79.
our civilisation peaks;
juries of the people
let self-confessed killers
walk free.

80.
the ground is hard and
water tanks are low;
perhaps El Nino
is merely the grandson
of global warming.

82.
our civilisation peaks;
the media has persuaded the masses
that vigilantes are
the heroes of our time.

83.
the queen of the media
has been accidentally consumed
by its own voracious appetite.

84.
the queen of the media is dead.
like sharks in a feeding frenzy
they dwell on her corpse.

85.
did the media make the queen
or the queen make the media?

86.
from beautiful princess
to fairy queen - a fantastic
creation of the media
and a victim of it;
a modern tragedy from
the makers and purveyors
of the news.

87.
and was that murder of innocents
known as the Port Arthur massacre
worse than the death of a princess?
yes it was thirty-five times worse!

88.
who has ever heard of a Saint
with a priceless diamond ring?

89.
the sudden death
of a princess monopolises
the headlines and the airwaves
for many days:
the creeping catastrophe
of global warming
is not news that sells.

90.
after death there is no pain -
thus it follows that hell
is a mirage created by some
to suppress others.

91.
with fear of hell
and promise of heaven
there is regimentation
        authority
        control.

92.
the only heaven (or hell)
is here, and now.

93.
and what of the passing
of the princess and the saint?
it has been said they were
both 'lionised' by the media
because they failed to ask
any of the hard questions.

94.
our civilisation peaks;
the rich employ
lawyers and accountants
and pay little tax
whilst the poor
carry the burden
for the defence of property
they do not own.

95.
farmers impoverished
by drought and falling prices
raise the flag of efficiency
with the minister for strikes;
but they are merely pawns
in his wider power play.

96.
king Canute showed that nature
is the final arbiter of life;
today politicians consult mining barons
on the state of the atmosphere.

97.
by planting a single tree
you have created more wealth
than the greatest merger
on Collins Street.

98.
and have we come to this?
that a slip of a child, naked,
dancing on a table
in some downtown bar
is called entertainment.

99.
the state has achieved
its AAA financial rating
whilst the injured and ailing
wait on their hospital trolleys.

100.
now we have
a minister for Coal
a minister for Taxes
and a minister for Strikes;
overseeing this callous cabal
is a prime minister of Indecision -
thus does history repeat itself.

101.
you and I are products
of the petrol age
commuting on four wheels!
get out and walk -
head towards the fresh air!

A. Angove has lived in east Gippsland for more than twenty-five years and has been writing for most of that time. She has published six small volumes of verse, *Bungeleen and other bush songs* (1989), *love songs the tao and mt. nugong* (1990), *Bun Jirrah Gingee Munjie* (1991), *Mt. Nugong No.22* (1993) *Kurnai Poems* (1994) and *The Tao of Modern Times* (1995). The former received favourable reviews in *The Small Times* and *Bun Jirrah Gingee Munjie* has a foreword by well-known poet and author of *The Ash Range*, Laurie Duggan. Angove has had work published in many small and off-beat poetry magazines and performed on community radio. She has developed a distinctive, simple, yet compelling style showing some influence of the 'Jindyworobaks'. Two of the poems have been anthologized in *PIE* (WAC, Melb.,1974) and *Shadow and Shine* (P. Morgan, CGS, Traralgon, 1988). A. Angove is a pseudonym.

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