

Taoism Main Text

Hello, this is AJ again. Welcome to our next lesson, this one's a really interesting one from one of my favorite writers. Absolutely love him, his name is Alan Watts. He actually died back in the '70s but just an amazing man, so intelligent and actually quite funny actually, just a great sense of humor. And Alan Watts is a very interesting guy. He was one of the first western people, meaning American or European, to learn about eastern spiritual practices, eastern religions. So he studied Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism, most especially Buddhism. He was a Buddhist. He became a Buddhist. And then he came back, for example, he lived in Japan actually for several years and learned Buddhism there in a monastery.

And then he came back and he wrote in English about these religions. The other interesting thing about him is that he was a Christian minister before he became a Buddhist. I believe he was Episcopalian which is a kind of Christian, but he was a minister, he was a preacher. And so the very interesting thing about Alan Watts is that he has a great understanding of both the western and the eastern religious practices, religious beliefs. And not just the normal kind of religion, just go to church and pray and read your little book, but really the deeper meanings of both Christianity, Buddhism, etc. And he has a great way of teaching eastern religions, especially Buddhism and Taoism, to western people in a way we can understand.

So anyway, he's also just a really funny, interesting guy and a very intellectual guy, very intelligent. So this is from one of his books about Taoism. Now Taoism is actually spelled with a "T", T-a-o-i-s-m, but it's pronounced "Daoism" like it's a "D". Why is that? Because English spelling is crazy. English spelling, as you already know, is very difficult and there's no logic about it, or very little logic about it. So it's spelled with a "T" but pronounced as a "D". I don't know why. Why didn't we just spell it with a "D"? I don't know. It comes from Chinese words so I guess they wrote it, they heard it wrong and I don't know. Anyway, it's pronounced "Daoism" and the book is called "Taoism Way Beyond Seeking" by Alan Watts, A-l-a-n and then his last name W-a-t-t-s. And by the way, he has a great podcast, alanwatts.com I believe is his podcast. So in this book Alan Watts talks about Taoism.

Taoism is a philosophy, not really a religion, I don't think. Maybe it is, I don't know, but in my opinion it's really more of a philosophy. It's a way of living. It's a philosophy about life. And it's a very natural philosophy. The basic idea of Taoism is that you should live in harmony with nature. You should follow nature, be part of nature. And if you live with nature instead of fighting it, your life will be much more successful and happy and easy. It's a little bit like Thoreau's idea. Remember Thoreau, Walden, remember that lesson? Well, Taoism has a similar kind of feeling. This idea that we don't fight against things,

we go with them. We do what is natural. So Effortless English, in many ways, is Taoist kind of English program. Because we're trying to go with your natural brain, right? We're trying to learn in the most natural way. We're not fighting against our brains. We're going with the brain. The brain loves stories so we use stories to teach English. The brain learns grammar best from patterns and stories, not from rules.

So we use patterns and stories to teach grammar. You learn vocabulary best and fastest from stories and from reading interesting articles and books, so that's what we use in our system. So this is the idea. You're not fighting against something with effort, trying, trying, trying. You're doing what is most natural. When you do what is most natural it's easier and it's more successful. Wow, two great things at the same time.

Alright, so now this section from his book talks about the subconscious. Remember, we've had this word before. It's the part of your brain that is working all the time but you don't know. It's the part of your intelligence, your brain that makes your heart beat... bom-bom, bom-bom, bom-bom, right? You don't have to think about it. You don't tell your heart to beat "Beat now, beat now, beat now," right? It's automatic. Your brain is making that happen subconsciously. Now you can breathe, for example, consciously or subconsciously. Usually when you're doing something you're not thinking about breathing. But you still continue to breathe, right? You're always breathing. You can also think about it, right? You can consciously think about breathing. You can decide... breathe in, breathe out. That's conscious breathing.

Subconscious breathing or unconscious breathing, it just happens automatically. You're doing something else. You're not thinking about it, but it still happens. Your brain is still working. So that kind of intelligence, that unconscious, that subconscious intelligence is the most powerful. That's most of our intelligence. Thinking about things with words or consciously thinking, it's very limited. We can only do a little bit with that. We think that's so great and that's what we always focus on. And our schools are always about conscious, conscious, conscious learning. We analyze. We think about the little parts of things, the little pieces of grammar, the individual vocabulary words. But that's not how the brain works best.

So let me read this part from Alan Watts now. Here we go:

"Now, if you want to find an intelligent solution to a problem, your brain can do the work. You have all the necessary intelligence inside of your skull. However, most people never use their brains. They use their conscious minds instead. And they use their conscious minds the same way they use their muscles. You can strain your head just as if it were a muscle. You can work very hard trying to find a solution.

But it doesn't really work well that way. When you really want to find an answer to something, what you need to do is contemplate the problem calmly. Visualize your question and then simply wait.

If you don't do this, if instead you try to find the solution through brute mental strength, you may be disappointed. Because any solution that comes in that way is likely to be wrong. But when you have waited for a while the solution will come by itself, automatically. That is how to use your brain. And it will work for you in the same way that your stomach will digest your food for you, without you having to supervise it consciously. Our attempts to supervise everything consciously have led to consequences that are not good for our stomach, and the reason is quite simple. Conscious attention, which uses and employs words, cannot think of very much.

Therefore we are forced to ignore almost everything else while we are thinking consciously. We think along a single track. But the real world doesn't proceed along a single track. The real world is everything happening altogether everywhere at the same time. And you just can't take all of that into consideration because there isn't time. However, your brain, your subconscious brain can take it all into consideration, because it is capable of handling innumerable variables at once. Even though your conscious attention cannot. Words are not capable of handling any more than a single very crude and simple track. And that is why we have to trust our brains. We are much more intelligent than we realize."

Okay, well, a little bit of a long section there. And what's the basic meaning of this? He's basically saying that your subconscious, the part that you're not aware about, the part that does not use words. The part of your brain that doesn't use words, it's much more intelligent. And I think we've all had this experience, right? You have this problem, this problem, and you're thinking and you're thinking and you're worried and all this stress. You're trying to solve the problem but you can't quite solve the problem.

And then finally, argh, you're so tired. You just stop. You go to bed or you go watch a movie or something. And then, when you're not thinking about it...suddenly boom!...a solution, a great solution, right? Your brain, your subconscious brain is thinking about it then. Finally, you let your subconscious brain work and it gives you the answer. It gives you a fantastic answer. So that's just one small example. The point is you must let your subconscious brain do its job. You have to trust it. It's far more intelligent than your conscious brain is.

Now, of course, as I was saying already, this is key to learning English. It's key to the Effortless English system. This is the foundation. This is the most important idea that we use with Effortless English. We are teaching you English with your subconscious brain. We are teaching to your subconscious brain. If you start thinking about it, if you try to study grammar rules, for example, you're going to destroy what I'm doing. You're going to destroy your subconscious brain. You're going to turn it off. You're going to

block it by thinking, thinking, thinking and studying all these grammar rules. Your grammar will not improve quickly.

So you must use our system. That's why I'm always telling you "Don't study grammar. Don't study grammar." Because we designed the system, I designed the system, to teach your subconscious brain. If you trust me, if you use the system exactly as I tell you, you will succeed very quickly. You'll be surprised. But you must do it. If you try to use my system and also study grammar, well it's not going to work very well. You're going to learn more slowly. If you try to use my system and also try to memorize single individual vocabulary words using a vocabulary textbook, you're going to hurt my system and you're going to learn more slowly. If you try to use textbooks or normal classes, normal English classes, and do my system at the same time, you can do that, it's your choice but you will learn more slowly. So please follow my system completely, 100%. Just try it for six months. Do all of these lessons. After you can do something else if you want, it's your choice.

But I don't think you will because you'll see the result. But you must use this system exactly as I tell you. One lesson set for one complete week. Only listening, don't try to memorize. Don't try to think about the rules or why this or why that...don't think about that. Just listen and enjoy. Listen and enjoy. Listen a lot. Listen a lot. Enjoy, smile. And in the mini-stories answer the questions quickly. That's all you need to do. If you do that then you're going to start doing what Alan Watts has described. Your subconscious brain will just start to remember English. You'll remember the vocabulary words. You'll start speaking, it comes out. You won't try. You will naturally start to speak more correctly, more quickly. Your pronunciation will naturally improve. You'll understand more English, faster and faster without trying. So it's the Taoism approach to learning English.

Alright, I will see you next for the vocabulary lesson.