

The Tao of the Software Architect

*Lao-Tsu, revisited by
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This is a very liberal reading of Lao-Tsu's Tao Te Ching for the use of software architects, based on various French and English translations. The number refers to the original tablets.

The architect observes the world
but trusts his inner vision.
He allows things to come and go.
His heart is open as the sky. (12)

The architect doesn't talk, he acts.
When this is done,
the team says, "Amazing:
we did it, all by ourselves!" (17)

When the architect leads, the team
is hardly aware that he exists.
Next best is a leader that is loved.
Next, one who is feared.
The worst one who is despised. (17)

A good traveler has no fixed plans
and is not intent upon arriving.
A good artist lets his intuition
lead him wherever it wants.
A good scientist has freed himself of concepts
and keeps his mind open to what is.
Thus the architect is available to everybody
and doesn't reject anyone.
He is ready to use all situations
and does not waste anything.
This is called embodying the light. (27)

If you want to shrink something,
you must first allow it to expand.
If you want to get rid of something,
you must first allow it to flourish.

If you want to take something,
you must first allow it to be given.
This is called the subtle perception
of the way things are.
The soft overcomes the hard.
The slow overcomes the fast.
Let your workings remain a mystery.
Just show people the results. (36)

When the process is lost, there is good practice.
When good practice is lost, there are rules.
When rules are lost, there is ritual.
Ritual is the beginning of chaos.* (38)

The architect concerns himself
with the depth and not the surface,
with the fruit and not the flower. (38)

The architect allows things to happen.
He shapes events as they come.
He steps out of the ways
and let the design speak for itself. (45)

The architect gives himself up
to whatever the moment brings.
He knows that he is going to leave,
and he has nothing left to hold on to:
no illusions, no resistance in his mind.
He holds nothing back from the project,
therefore is ready for departure[†],
as a man is ready for sleep
after a good day's work. (50)

The great way is easy,
yet programmers prefer the side paths.
Be aware when things are out of balance.
Remain centered within the design. (53)

The architect's power is like this.
He let all things come and go
effortlessly, without desire.
He never expect results;
thus he is never disappointed.
He is never disappointed,

thus his spirit never grows old. (55)

Those who know don't talk.
Those who talk don't know. (56)

Alternate:

Those who do not have a clue are still debating about the process.
Those who know, just do it. (56)

The architect is content
to serve as an example
and not to impose his will.
He is pointed, but doesn't pierce.
Straightforward, but supple.
Radiant, but easy on the eyes. (58)

If you want to be a great leader,
stop trying to control.
Let go of fixed plans and concepts and
the team will govern itself.
The more prohibitions you have,
the less disciplined the team will be.
The more coercion you exert,
the less secure the team will be.
The more external help you call,
the less self-reliant the team will be. (57)

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* Sounds a bit like the SEI CMM! Jim Archer said: "First you pay for results, Then you pay for effort, Finally you pay for attendance."

† Especially when he's only a Rational consultant.